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of the National Education Association

Thinking about Refinancing?
See page 28

What's the Secret to Teaching Reading?

Right now, Dot Fowler may be the only teacher who knows.

See page 4

NEA Today

January 1998
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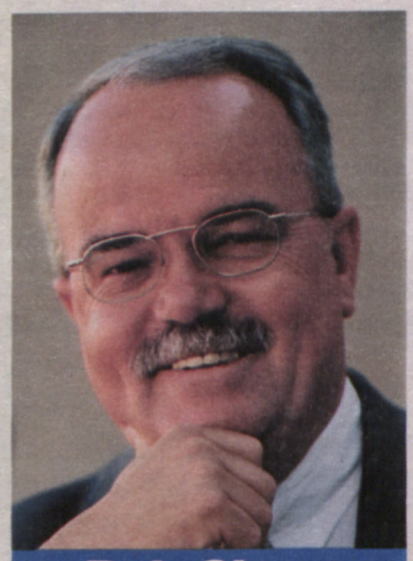
Teaching the First *R*: Is There a *Best* Way?

President's Viewpoint

Stop the sound and fury of the phonics vs. whole language war. We need both.



Bob Chase

In my last column, I invited *NEA Today* readers to send me their thoughts about the best way to teach reading. Many of you responded. In almost every one of your comments, I found two central themes.

First, beware of the "one true method" imposed from on high! Different children learn to read differently. As school psychologist Philip Bowser from Roseburg, Oregon, put it, "Reading is not a one-size-fits-all phenomenon!"

And Jim Buchanan, a reading teacher from Woodhull, New York, warns that the reading debate has been poisoned by self-righteous individuals who believe they are in sole possession of the truth.

"None of us has the truth," he says. "We can only hope to move toward better understandings by putting our most cherished beliefs on the line and letting them stand or fall in the crucible of our own classrooms."

Second, you said balance is the key. Kim Schneider, an elementary teacher from Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, echoed the sentiments of many when she wrote: "It should not be a debate of phonics or whole language, but how we combine every possible option to create the ultimate learning environment for children."

Another reader suggested I take a look at the Success for All program. So I did, and I liked what I learned.

Now 10 years old, Success for All operates in 460 schools in 100 districts and 31 states. At the very heart of Success for All's instructional program is an intensive reading curriculum that fuses phonics and a whole language—or story-based—approach.

Students in Success for All schools score noticeably higher on reading tests than their counterparts in similar schools with mostly at-risk students.

I was particularly impressed with the program's tutoring element. Success for All students are evaluated every eight weeks, and the lowest achievers in their grade are tutored—one-on-one, 20 minutes every day for however long it takes, by certified teachers with backgrounds in reading or by highly trained paraprofessionals.

To learn more about Success for All, send an E-mail message to bcoppersm@csos.jhu.edu or write to the Center for Research on the Education of Students Placed At Risk, Johns Hopkins University, 3505 N. Charles St., Baltimore, MD 21218.

Now, I'm not suggesting that Success for All is the one and only program for everyone. There are other programs worth considering.

For example, James Comer's School Development Program is impressive. For a review of Comer's latest book, check out page 45.

The most important consideration is finding what works in the crucible of our own classrooms. We all know that the child who falls behind in reading is a child in serious trouble—in school and probably in life.

On the 1994 National Assessment of Educational Progress reading test, 29 percent of white fourth graders scored below the basic level, as did 69 percent of African-American students and 64 percent of Hispanic students.

We can't expect public education to endure in America when a majority of minority children and a sizable minority of white children are not even learning to read at the basic level.

True, some children grow up in neighborhoods where there are more liquor stores than bookstores and in homes where there are more television sets than books. I understand that. But for us that is a challenge, not an excuse.

We now know that early and intensive reading instruction by skilled teachers in small classes, using phonics and whole language methods with tutorial backup, will succeed.

At this point in history, the only thing of value to be gained from the holy war between phonics and whole language is a deeper appreciation that education has become way too politicized. There is no reason on earth why teaching children to read should be a partisan or ideological issue.

To motivate children to read, NEA is sponsoring Read Across America, a nationwide event like no other. On March 2, 1998—Dr. Seuss's birthday—we are calling for every child in every school in every community to be in the company of a book. For details, take a look at page 6.

We're also intensifying our efforts to focus the needed resources on children learning to read in kindergarten and the early grades.

Our Association intends to keep the spotlight on reading. Thank you for your encouragement.

Can We Talk?

Are safety and discipline problems in your school? What works? What doesn't? Send an E-mail message to me at BobChase@nea.org with your thoughts. Thanks.

NEA at a Glance

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Did You Know...
That *NEA Today* is now on the Web. Go to **www.nea.org/neatoday** and you'll be able to read all articles from the magazine, vote on each Debate question, get a laugh from The Light Lane, chat with colleagues around the country and experts cited in articles, post your reactions and letters to the editor, and link to many other useful sites. Why not check it out?

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NEA Today this Month

Help's on the Way

Trend alert: Kids are doing more homework than ever before. According to the latest Department of Education numbers, 70 percent of 13-year-olds spend at least an hour a day on homework, up from 40 percent in 1982. With parents working and public libraries reducing hours, kids are turning to the Net for help. And there's help there—lots of it. For a list of sites you can recommend to your students—including Cool School Tools and Homework Heaven—go to *NEA Today Online* at www.nea.org/neatoday and click on "Extra! Extra!"

Dan Lothin

Cover Story

4 Read On
For the past two years, Virginia teacher Dot Fowler (right) has served as the only classroom teacher on a prestigious National Academy of Sciences panel studying how to prevent reading difficulties. This spring, the panel will release its groundbreaking report. In the meantime, Fowler has been busy integrating research and practice in her classroom. Watch over her shoulder as she teaches her first grade students to read.

Rick Brady

Cover photo by Rick Brady

Newsmakers

7 On Capitol Hill
If you're a paraprofessional who wants to be a teacher, Congress may be willing to help you out. Get the details.

8 In the Community
The "Green Eggs to Hamlet" Read-In rolls into Indianapolis, as NEA members across the country scramble up some neat ways to turn kids on to reading.

9 In Private Hands
What will you do when Chris Whittle comes knocking on your door? NEA members in Flint (below) bargained to protect students and employees.

10 In the States
Watch your state legislature for a bill coming soon to boost your pension fund's assets and independence.

11 Around the World
More than 125,000 K-12 teachers in Ontario walked out last fall in the largest teacher protest in North American history. Find out why.

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What's Dot

This 15-year veteran is the only classroom teacher on a national panel of scientists that may soon settle the phonics vs. whole language war.

Every few months for the last two years, Dottie Fowler has turned her Fairfax, Virginia, first grade class over to a substitute, jumped into her car, and headed off to the prestigious National Academy of Sciences in Washington, D.C.

There, inside the Academy's massive brick headquarters, she serves as the only K-12 teacher on a prestigious panel that includes 16 of the nation's leading experts on reading.

The panel's charge: write *the* definitive report on how to prevent reading difficulties.

Both whole language and phonics advocates are nervous that the report—due out this spring—will challenge their methods.

But that doesn't bother Fowler. She doesn't care about the ideological wars. She just wants to know how best to teach reading to her first graders.

Back in her own classroom at Bailey's Elementary, Fowler has been busy translating the new reading research into practical strategies that will help her mostly poor, immigrant, and at-risk students learn to read.

"I've come away with a notion of what good practice is," Fowler says, "and it includes phonics, good literature, and more.

"This has probably been my most reflective year as a teacher," Fowler says. "The research tells us that students need many things to be great readers. I'm trying to find a way they can get them all."

Here's Dot's seven-part secret.

1 Phonemic awareness. The day starts with Fowler's children sitting shoulder to shoulder, reading colorful, illustrated stories. She's at a side table, reading a child verses from *The New Mother Goose*.

"I've started out this year teaching nursery rhymes," she says. "It makes it easier for children to hear sounds. I'd never done that before. But I can see how it helps.

"We don't just read them for fun," Fowler adds. "New research shows how important it is for children to understand that words are made up of individual sounds. Rhyming helps drive this point home. Without this basic building block in place, many students will flounder."

2 Phonics. After a seamless transition from their independent reading lesson, Fowler's students sit on the floor in three rows, small white marker boards in one hand, magic markers in the other. Fowler is in front of the room.

"If this is *my*," she says, pointing to the *m-y* on the board, "how would you spell *by*?"

The little heads turn down. They scribble. And several hands shoot up in the air. The children have seen these words several times today and are doing well. Fowler smiles as she quickly glances at the students' boards.

"Now, stretch with me," Fowler says. "Listen carefully. *Ffff—llll—iiii.* Can you write *fly*?" Again the heads turn down.

"We know that phonics is an absolutely crucial component of teaching children to read," Fowler says. "But I also don't think one size can fit all. I try to be middle-of-the-road, searching for a sensible center.

"I don't see any reason to go back to the

Rick Brady

"It's easy for the real world to get lost when you start working on academic studies," says teacher Dot Fowler. "Bridging the gap is important."

's Secret?

days of Dan-Can-Fan-the-Man. I spend a lot of time developing my students' comprehension and analytical skills. It all goes together to make good readers."

3 Good stories. All Fowler's students have a basket of half a dozen or more books carefully chosen to match their reading level. In bookcases around the room, there are hundreds of other books, ready for her students as they progress.

"I don't see students learning to love reading using books that don't tell a story," Fowler says. "Phonics and whole language should be complementary components of a good reading program."

4 Individual instruction. A six-year-old boy named Steven now sits at the side table with Fowler.

"He's so far behind, I have to make sure he gets the basics from me, one on one, every day," she says.

Some of her students came to school knowing how to read, but Steven didn't even know his letters and still struggles to speak in complete sentences.

"The reality is that we have to work effectively with kids of dramatically different abilities in first grade," Fowler says. "It means you simply have to find a way to individualize your reading instruction."

While Steven's progress is slow, Fowler is quick to point out how others have already benefited greatly from individual attention.

Peter is a perfect example, she says. During the group phonics session, Peter was one of the few children who couldn't sit still. Tying his shoe, untying his shoe, stretching, dropping his pencil, trying to distract the girl next to him.

"He's going to be one of my success stories," Fowler says with a smile. "He came to school not knowing his letters. And he doesn't get much out of group instruction.

"But when you work with him one-on-one, he grasps the basic language structures very quickly, and he can read a book independently and apply what he's learning. He's just about where he should be in first grade now.

"In a traditional class with everyone receiving rote lessons," Fowler adds, "Peter probably wouldn't have learned a thing."

5 Classroom management. "All the theory in the world is great," says Fowler. "But you've got to have children doing what you want them to do when you want them to do it."

It helps to have small classes. Fowler applauds her school district for limiting class size to 15 for at-risk students in the early grades.

But effective teaching still requires effective classroom management techniques.

Fowler spends a lot of time at the beginning of each school year telling her students exactly what's expected of them, teaching them to regulate their own behavior, and practicing daily routines.

Whatever the classroom configuration, Fowler's students know how to behave and make the transition to the next lesson. That saves a teacher a lot of time and energy, she says.

6 Writing, repetition, and records. Fowler ends her day's lesson with students first drawing a picture and then writing a story about the picture they've drawn.

She encourages her students to use by, my, fly, and sky—the same words they'd practiced in phonics and shared reading earlier in the day.

"Good instruction requires a lot of repetition," she says. "And when students write, it gives them an additional way to practice their language.

"Writing also lets some of my more advanced students express themselves fully," Fowler adds.

Jane is a case in point. "5 days ago, I got my rollerblads," she writes, matching a neatly drawn picture of a girl skating in a park. "They are buckle, not tie."

Jane is the last student Fowler checks on before closing her thick, brown notebook, full of detailed records of her students' progress.

The book is indispensible, Fowler says. She bases each week's lessons on a review of her notes and an analysis of what sounds students have and have not mastered.

"I use it not only to plan instruction," Fowler says, "but also to guide my entire approach to teaching."

7 Results. Last year, all but one of Fowler's at-risk first grade students was reading at grade level by the time the school year ended.

It's hard to argue with results like that, but Fowler's not completely satisfied. She continues to hone her craft, searching for techniques that will work just a bit better, especially with kids like Steven.

When Fowler passes out homework envelopes at the end of the day, most students grab books from their baskets and stuff them away to take home to read that night. Steven doesn't.

A few minutes after all the children have left, Steven's back at the door. For a moment, Fowler leaps happily to the conclusion that he's come back for a book.

But the truth soon becomes clear. He's back because his mother didn't come to pick him up. He needs Fowler to take him to the office to call home.

The Report You've Been Waiting For

This spring, the National Academy of Sciences will release a landmark study on preventing reading difficulties.

Here are the facts about the study:

- The National Academy of Sciences is a non-profit, private organization, created by the federal government to study scientific issues.
- The Preventing Reading Difficulties report was commissioned by the Department of Education and the National Institutes of Health in 1995.
- The 17-member panel responsible for the reading report was chosen through an elaborate selection process.

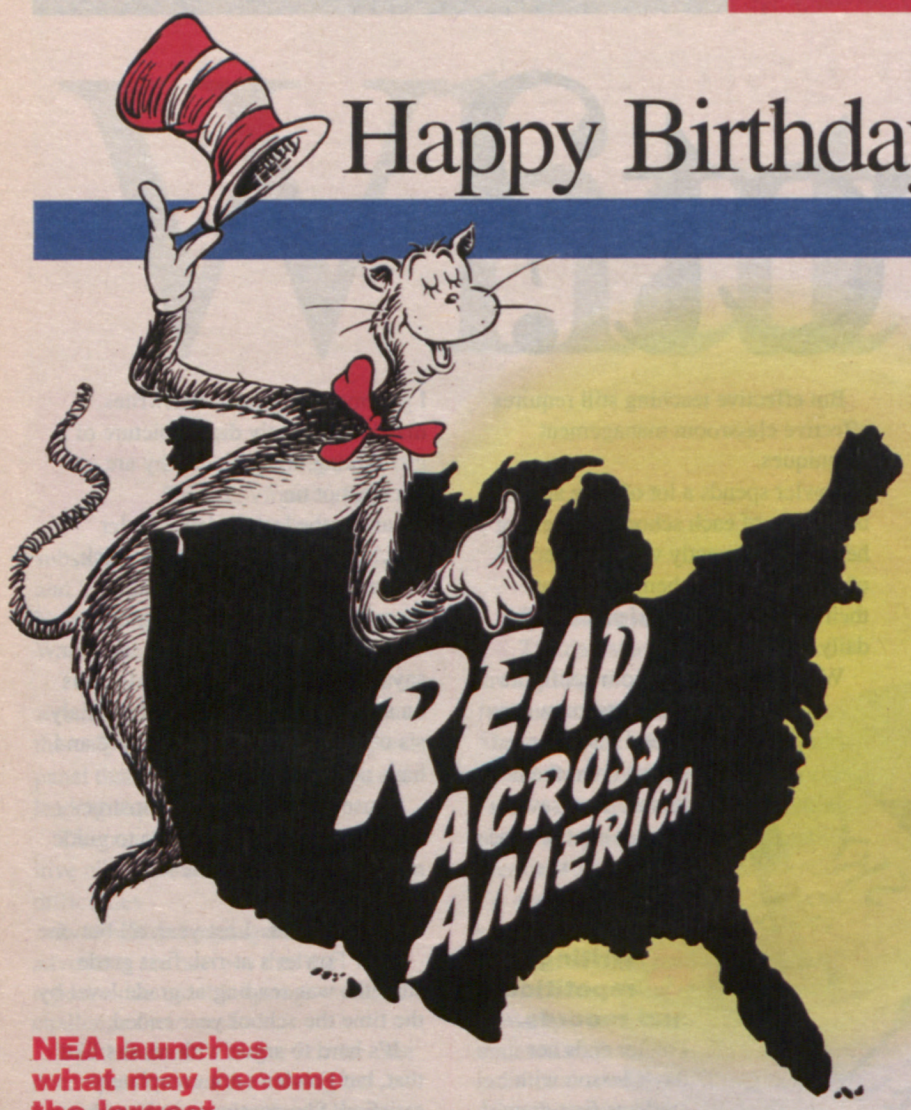
First, National Academy of Sciences staffers interviewed 100 experts in the field. Then they asked the people they interviewed for panel recommendations, narrowed that list, and presented it to yet another panel.

- Once they were selected, panel members frequently came to Washington to write or to critique the work of their colleagues. They also met as a full body 10 times, often for several days, over their two working years.
- Besides their lengthy scientific report, the NAS reading panel has also prepared a summary of the report that focuses on preventing reading difficulties in actual teaching situations—a parents and practitioners guide of sorts.
- When they finished their work a few months ago, the panelists submitted the two reports to another review panel of distinguished experts. After their comments are reviewed, the reports will be ready for public release.
- In April, the National Academy of Sciences will release two versions of the final report, *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children*.

The "scholarly" version will explain what constitutes effective practice from preschool to third grade and will look at the gaps in knowledge that remain. The report will run 350 pages and cost $39.95. To order, call 800/624-6242 or 202/334-3313.

For information on the shorter "popular" version, see the resource box on page 6.

Happy Birthday, Dr. Seuss!



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Join us March 2nd
your own special way,
And make this America's
Read-to-Kids Day.

There are children around you,
children in need
of someone who'll hug,
someone who'll read.

In churches and chambers,
Let's gather around.
Let's pick up a book.
Let's pass it around.

You're never too old,
too wacky, too wild,
to pick up a book
and read to a child.

—Anita Merina

NEA launches what may become the largest literacy event ever on March 2.

Los Angeles teacher and NEA Executive Committee member Denise Rockwell Woods answers some of your questions about NEA's plan for a celebration of Dr. Seuss's birthday. The event, Read Across America, will take place on March 2.

Denise Rockwell Woods

What is Read Across America?

NEA is calling for every child in every school in every community to be in the company of a book to celebrate Dr. Seuss's birthday on the evening of March 2.

Where'd the idea come from?

Last summer, NEA's Urban Commission sponsored a "Green Eggs to Hamlet" Read-In at the Representative Assembly. It was so successful, we decided to go national.

Why is NEA doing this?

Research shows that when children read outside of school, they do better inside school. Read Across America offers a great opportunity to motivate children to read and to work with parents and others in our communities to help students learn.

What will happen on March 2?

Local NEA affiliates are targeting schools, libraries, and bookstores to get them to sponsor special events. Some children will read at home with their families. Other young people will arrive at school, pillows in hand, for a bedtime read-in.

Plus, local firefighters will host evening read-athons at the local firehouse. Older kids will read to younger ones. The list goes on.

We're finding that when our state and local Associations are involved, there's no end to the creative ideas. You name it—if reading is involved, they're planning it.

What specifically are people planning?

A few examples: The New Jersey Education Association is recruiting judges to bring students to their chambers on March 2 to discuss reading and take a sworn oath to read that evening.

The Arizona Education Association is lining up legislators for a State Capitol Readathon. The North Carolina Association of Educators will put 10,000 books into the hands of children who need them.

Let us know what you're planning by posting a message on NEA's Read Across America Web site at www.nea.org/readacross.

Is NEA doing this alone?

No. NEA is building an impressive coalition to make Read Across America a success. We're already getting help from the American Library Association, the PTA, Reading Is Fundamental, the National Family Literacy Center, Scholastic Inc., the Newspaper Association of America, Communities in Schools, Random House, and Dr. Seuss Enterprises.

In the upcoming month, we'll be cementing alliances with most of the major educational organizations and several other groups as well.

What can I do?

Ready to plan a Read Across America event in your town? The box below will give you specific suggestions on how to get started.

Resources

- **Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children (popular version).** *The National Academy of Sciences, 120 pp. $14.95 for one copy, $9.95 each for 10 or more.* This volume boils down the research findings to practical guidelines and suggestions. ISBN 0-309-06410-4. Available in April. Call 800/624-6242 or 202/334-3313.
- **Reading Instruction that Works: The Case for Balanced Teaching.** *Michael Pressley, Guilford Press, $20.* This book profiles some of the country's most effective reading instructors, documenting how they combine aspects of both skill and whole language approaches. Call 800/365-7006 or go to www.guilford.com.
- **International Reading Association.** The IRA provides a wide selection of resources, including *Teaching Phonics Today: A Primer for Educators* by National Academy of Sciences panelist Dorothy Strickland, which will be published in March. Write to IRA, 800 Barksdale Rd., P.O. Box 8139, Newark, DE 19714-8139 or call 302/731-1600.
- **National Institutes of Child Health and Development.** For the latest on reading research conducted at the National Institutes of Health, write to Rickie Searle, NICHD, Building 6100, Room 4B05, 9000 Rockville Pike, MSC-7510, Bethesda, MD 20892-7516.
- **What do *you* think makes for good reading instruction?** You can comment on Dot Fowler's strategies, add a few of your own, and find out what others think. It's easy with *NEA Today Online* at www.nea.org/neatoday.

Time To Get Started

1 Call your NEA local affiliate to see what's being planned. If nothing is in the works yet, gather colleagues, brainstorm, and make something happen.

2 Start the ball rolling by cutting out this page, showing it to colleagues, and posting it in the faculty lounge, library, and bus garage.

3 Reach out in your community—to the PTA, school and public librarians, bookstores, firehouses, hospitals, and police stations.

4 Don't be afraid to be creative. Reach out to TV and radio celebrities, your mayor, the police chief, business leaders, clergy, and local authors to help plan read-athons all over town. Suggest that people dress up in costumes depicting their favorite book characters.

5 To get 10 more ideas, visit the Read Across America Web site at www.nea.org/readacross, call our Fax-on-Demand service toll-free at 888/747-READ, or call us at 202/822-7830.

On Capitol Hill

A Bridge for Paraprofessionals?

Teacher training and recruitment may both get a boost from a bill now being debated in Congress.

For a long time, Kris Strnad, president of the 2,500-member Milwaukee Educational Assistants' Association, and her members have been telling their district to plan for a teacher shortage.

Now their words are hitting home.

Because of retirements, an enrollment increase, and a big sign-up for the district's teacher mentoring programs, Milwaukee is hurting for certified people—especially subs.

To help out, the NEA-affiliated MEAA negotiated an agreement with the district that permits paraprofessionals—teaching assistants—holding college degrees to take a year's leave of absence to work as substitute teachers.

"This program gives paras a chance to see if they're good at teaching," says Strnad. "After a year, they may be offered a provisional license and must get the necessary college credits."

Strnad, who assists math and science teachers at Bay View High School, says many paraprofessionals in Milwaukee would like to be certified—and would make great teachers.

"Because members live in Milwaukee communities," Strnad explains, "they understand the kids and where they come from. They have a clue what life is like for a kid in the city.

"These classroom veterans," she adds, "are tried, true, and homegrown."

Paraprofessionals all over the country are in the same position—they're committed and needed.

The U.S. Department of Education predicts that districts will need to hire some 2 million new teachers over the next 10 years.

What paras who want to become teachers lack is funding to help them get the credentials they need. Fortunately, Congress is paying attention.

Federal support for recruitment and training of new teachers is just one issue Congress is considering as it reauthorizes the Higher Education Act, the law providing resources for post-secondary education students, programs, and institutions.

As Congress expands and improves the HEA—a leading agenda item for 1998—NEA is working to put new life and funding into Title V, the section dealing with K-12 professional development.

NEA lobbyist Bob Canavan reports that bills now in the hopper to revise Title V speak to needs like recruiting, training and mentoring new teachers, improving professional development to keep up with technology, and luring qualified recruits to urban and rural schools.

NEA is working hard to ensure that the final bill effectively promotes:

- **Recruitment and training of teachers from "new" categories.** That includes educational support personnel and people currently in noneducational careers.
- **Continuing teacher training.** "Our mission," says Canavan, "is to make sure that new programs extend professional development beyond the second or third year to one's entire teaching career."
- **Partnerships between teacher training institutions and public schools.** A bill, introduced by Senator Jack Reed (D-Rhode Island) and supported by NEA, would authorize a five-year competitive grant program for teacher preparation, induction, and continuing professional development. Grants would fund professional development schools and other partnerships between public schools and universities.

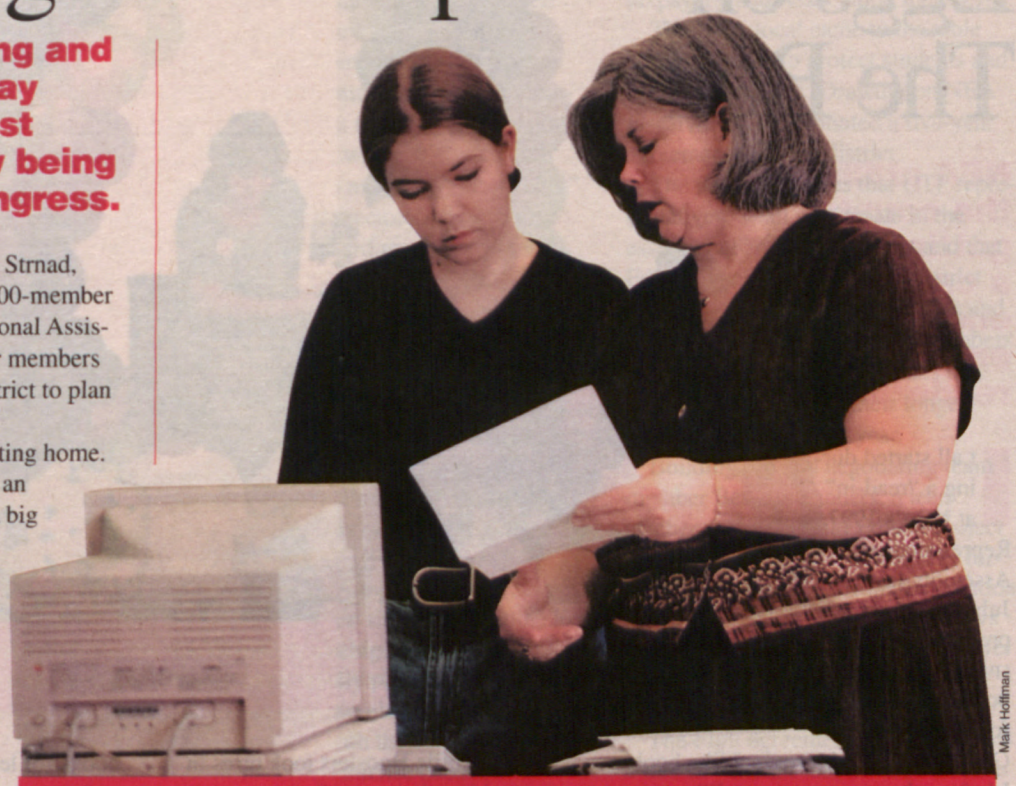
Reed thinks that the current "sink-or-swim method of teacher preparation" should be allowed to drown. Teacher training, he says, should be tied to real-life classrooms.

"Our future teachers need and deserve the kinds of hands-on training and 'real world' experience they'll get from more exposure and practice in today's classrooms," Reed says.

What can you do to increase the chances that a federal bill will pass?

"Tell your members of Congress how important it is to have a qualified teacher in every classroom," says NEA's Canavan.

"And," he adds, "remind lawmakers that ongoing professional development is a big part of being a teacher—especially now, when things are changing more rapidly than ever."



Mark Hoffman

Milwaukee NEA leader Kris Strnad (right) supports local and federal plans that pave the way for paraprofessionals to become teachers.

For Your Information

For an update on the legislative proposals in NEA's Quality Public Schools Agenda, go to www.nea.org/qpsa.

Heroes & Zeroes

An Above-and-Beyond Our Borders Award to the 60 members of the Charlevoix-Emmet Intermediate Education Association in northern Michigan, who help fund the Redempter School in Haiti through payroll deduction. "We may complain a lot, but we have it pretty good," says school social worker Jack Dean. "We wanted to do something for those who aren't so fortunate."

Dog days in Alabama, where a Search Party Dog Handler with two years of experience and a high school diploma can earn more than $43,000—but a teacher with a doctorate and 21 years of experience tops out at under $41,000. Woof.

A thousand thanks (copied back-to-back) to Kinko's for its Partnership in Education Program, launched in 1995. More than 850 Kinko's offices now provide in-kind donations—such as free copies and paper—to local public elementary schools. That adds up to a $1.3 million in-kind contribution so far. Interested? Contact the Kinko's nearest you.

Just don't buy psychologist Diane McGuinness's new book, *Why Our Children Can't Read.* According to *U.S. News & World Report,* McGuinness relies on a study of 87 children conducted by her son and daughter-in-law, who own a company that sells the curriculum they "tested," to prove that phonics works. The book lists the company's toll-free number more than half a dozen times.

How about "National Bring a CEO to School Day"? IDG executive Gary Beach proposes the idea to bring bosses into classrooms to see for themselves what kind of technology schools are using. For details, send an E-mail message to gary_beach @idg.com.

In the Community

Nebraska's Book Harvest

The Lincoln Education Association has joined with the *Lincoln Journal Star* newspaper for a "Harvest of Books" drive. The goal: to give one free book to each first grader in Lincoln public schools.

The *Journal Star* and city bookstores are promoting the drive. When bookstore customers buy and donate books from a teacher-compiled list, they get a 40 percent discount on those books, plus a discount on any store purchase.

Hey, Check It Out!

The Utah Education Association is now winding up a successful "It's an Up Thing To Read" student literacy campaign—involving the Seven-Up Company, Radio Disney, and 7,000 teachers in 250 elementary schools.

When students show teachers a book they've checked out of a library, teachers place a UEA logo sticker on a special "library card." Those stamped cards lead to prizes, shopping sprees, and, ultimately, a grand prize drawing for a full school computer system.

Children's Television Act

Sure, kids should read and be read to. But TV sets are *still* glowing out there.

So here's something you should know: The federal Children's Television Act requires that commercial broadcasters now air at least three hours a week of programming "specifically designed" to serve the educational and informational needs of children ages 2 to 16.

Stations must identify each show as an educational program at the start of the broadcast and air the show between 7 a.m. and 10 p.m.

In addition, the Federal Communications Commission is calling on parents, educators, and other child advocates to evaluate these shows and provide feedback to networks, local stations, and the FCC.

Want to get involved? Point your Web browser to the Center for Media Education's *Field Guide to the Children's Television Act* at www.cme.org/cme.

Green Eggs on The Boil

NEA affiliates across the country are getting behind a campaign to encourage and enable early readers.

Kids gather 'round NEA member Nancy Mindrup at a "Green Eggs to Hamlet" Read-In sponsored by the Indianapolis Education Association in September.

ISTA

It all started during a "read-in" at NEA's 1997 Representative Assembly last July. An urban preschooler snatched a book from a former Harlem Globetrotter and blurted, "I like books. It's fun when you get to read!"

That book, Dr. Seuss's *Green Eggs and Ham,* and that child's enthusiasm for a skill she doesn't yet possess, are critical ingredients in the "Green Eggs to Hamlet" reading campaign, launched by NEA's Emergency Commission on Urban Children.

The commission, which unites NEA urban activists with some of America's most committed advocates for kids, aims to have every child reading by third grade.

That's something lots of folks want to get behind. As a result, "Green Eggs to Hamlet" has hit the frying pan—and NEA members all over the country are scrambling up some pretty neat ways to turn young children on to reading.

NEA urban locals have been first at the burner, sponsoring "Green Eggs" read-ins in places like Indianapolis, Pinellas County in Florida, and Richmond, California.

"Green Eggs" rolled to Indianapolis on a Saturday in September. Members of the Indianapolis Education Association outfitted the huge Indiana Government Center for the event.

High-profile Hoosiers took turns in two rocking chairs, reading age-appropriate stories to some 150 eager kids seated before them on rugs.

"The deputy state police director even let each child read a page back to him," reports Indiana State Teachers Association staffer Norma Kacen. "The kids *loved* it. They were so excited to be a part of the reading."

This burgeoning love for books didn't go unnoticed by Barnes & Noble, which publicized the event in its bookstores and—with its customers—donated new books to Indianapolis public school libraries.

NEA members in rural Jefferson County, Alabama, are finalizing plans to record books for children on audiotapes and make multiple copies for distribution to schools at no cost.

To raise the cash needed to cover expenses, the 2,000-member NEA affiliate will turn to local businesses. Volunteers stand ready as readers.

Local Association Vice-President Sue Nielsen, who brainstormed the audiotape concept along with JCEA President Diane Weber, says the local is especially interested in taping textbooks for learning disabled children—or just poor readers—who struggle in regular classes. "While they may not be able to read regular textbooks, they're good listeners," Nielsen notes.

All the more reason to read to *all* kids early in life.

"Far too many children still begin school never having had an adult read a book to them," points out NEA President Bob Chase.

"Too many fourth and fifth graders fall behind and never catch up," he adds. "There's no reason on earth why a child reading *Green Eggs and Ham* in kindergarten shouldn't be reading *Aesop's Fables* by the fourth grade."

That's one of a dozen good reasons to take the read-in idea national. For details on NEA's first-ever Read Across America, scheduled for Dr. Seuss's birthday on March 2, see page 6.

For More Information

For help in organizing a "Green Eggs to Hamlet" event in your community, call LaMar Haynes at 202/822-7015 or send E-mail to Lhaynes@nea.org.

The Bottom Line

Science: Elementary kids understand grade-appropriate science concepts better than secondary students do. Some 67 percent of fourth graders can demonstrate understanding, compared to 61 percent of eighth graders and 57 percent of seniors.

High marks for math: Teens now believe that success in math is the key to future career success. A recent Drexel University survey found that 62 percent of teens rate math their most important course. The second-place choice: English, with 32 percent.

More math: Low-income students who take math courses through geometry are three times more likely to go to college than poor kids who never tackle theorems, according to a new U.S. Department of Education report, *Mathematics Equals Opportunity.*

Enjoying school: Kids look forward to going to school, at least more than they used to. A 1997 Roper Youth Report puts the number of kids who look forward to school this year at 67 percent of all students. That's up from 61 percent in 1996.

In Private Hands

Putting Kids Before Profits

What will you do when Chris Whittle comes knocking on your door?

If America's fastest growing, for-profit school management firm knocks on your district's doors, will your NEA affiliate respond with battle plans—or bargaining proposals?

NEA local affiliates in 12 states are facing that tough choice as entrepreneur Chris Whittle's Edison Project moves in.

By September, the company—founded in 1991 by the same folks who brought you Channel One—had signed deals to run 25 charter or Edison/district "partnership" schools, with a total of 13,000 students.

Here's a look at how two NEA affiliates have responded to overtures from the Edison Project.

Battle Plans in Oregon: When Edison proposed a "partnership school" in Oregon last spring, Beaverton Education Association members called NEA for help.

NEA opposes school takeovers by for-profit companies and provides research and networking to help affiliates keep public schools in *public* hands.

With information from NEA, Beaverton educators were able to tell their school board about Edison's pitfalls—including its inconclusive student achievement data and its reluctance to disclose financial information.

"This district was very sensitive to people trying to make a profit off kids," says UniServ Director Tom Husted. "And several board members with business backgrounds were concerned about Edison's non-track record."

With so many unanswered questions, the Edison Project proposal in Beaverton never came to a vote.

Bargaining Proposals in Michigan: For every Beaverton, there seems to be a district where Edison's promises—state-of-the-art curriculum, longer school calendar, greater parental involvement, a computer in every student's home—are simply irresistible.

The Flint, Michigan, school district is one. Financially pressed, the district now manages two elementary schools in partnership with the Edison Project.

Following an intense debate—fueled by Edison's threat to use an anything-goes state charter school law to set up competing schools outside district boundaries—the NEA-affiliated United Teachers of Flint voted to accept the partnership scheme as the best available option for students, taxpayers, and Association members.

The NEA local came to the table with proposals to protect students and school employees. Drawing on NEA research, UTF negotiated a five-year agreement with the district.

The pact guarantees that UTF representatives "shall participate in the assessment" of these schools and that Edison teachers will remain district employees—with the same rights and benefits as other Association members.

Plus, the agreement provides the teachers more pay for their longer school day and school year.

Building rep and negotiating team member Belinda Sanders, a lead teacher at the Garfield Edison Project School, is proud that the contract forbids layoffs resulting from the creation of the partnership schools and allows dissatisfied Edison teachers to transfer back to regular district schools—no questions asked.

The Flint agreement also guarantees a mix of veterans and novices on each Edison teaching team.

"We negotiated that language," explains UniServ Director Brian Veenhuis, "because Edison schools are well known for hiring an inordinate number of inexperienced teachers."

Sanders says she's excited about her school's mission of "giving *all* students a world-class education and improving self-esteem."

But that mission, says Mark Brophy, president of the Educational Association of Worcester (Massachusetts) and observer of a local Edison school, can be accomplished without Edison.

Says Brophy: "Ultimately, the best way to defeat the Edison Project is to beat them at their own game—by improving public schools. Anything an Edison school does, *you* can do, too, in an existing public school in your own neighborhood."

Robert Chase

NEA members working at the Garfield Edison Project School in Flint, Michigan (from left): Jeanne Black-Walsh, Darlene McClendon, Laurie Leech, and Belinda Sanders.

For More Information

Call Heidi Steffens at NEA's Center for the Advancement of Public Education at 202/822-7227 or send E-mail to HSteffens@nea.org.

Delaware Allows Edison

The Delaware State Board of Education has voted to allow the Edison Project to open a for-profit charter school as early as next year.

The Delaware State Education Association has filed suit against the move, charging that state law doesn't authorize the board to grant charters to for-profit firms. And, contends DSEA, the state constitution doesn't permit the mingling of public and private funds for profit.

"We're very supportive of charter schools," says DSEA President Mary Ann Pry, "but we don't think the public or General Assembly would like to see taxpayer money reaching stockholders' pockets."

Privateers in Pennsylvania

On the heels of a suit filed by the Pennsylvania State Education Association, a state judge has enjoined Beacon Education Management from "managing or operating" the Wilkinsburg district's Turner Elementary after this school year. Beacon took over the school in 1995 and hired its own staff.

The state charter school law, the judge found, doesn't give districts the authority to turn schools over to private, for-profit companies.

Under a court ruling last year, teachers furloughed to make way for the BEM "experiment" were to be reinstated with back pay.

Drooling Over Schooling

Last summer, venture capitalists and education entrepreneurs gathered in Nashville to brainstorm about how to turn the American public education system into a major for-profit industry.

Investment firm director Mary Tanner told "EdVentures '97" participants that some of the same investors who reaped big dividends from the hospital industry are now ready to put money into school management companies like Beacon Education Management and the Edison Project.

For more information, set your Web browser to www.nea.org/society/private/edvent.html.

Kids and health care: The number of children without health insurance jumped by 700,000 in 1996. Some 10.3 million young people went uninsured last year, says the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. That's 15 percent of all kids.

Healthy incomes: An estimated 1,000 Wall Street bankers, traders, and analysts will pull in bonuses this year of at least $1 million. Overall, reports the *New York Observer*, the securities industry estimates $12 billion in pretax profits from 1997 operations.

Superintendent pay: The highest-paid big-city superintendent in the United States last year earned $199,800, reports the Council of Great City Schools. The average salary for superintendents in the nation's biggest urban school districts: $139,404.

Main Street and Wall Street: Some 71 percent of American families hold either no stocks or less than $2,000 worth, reports *Business Week*. The bottom 90 percent of households now own 16 percent of all shares, down from 19 percent in 1992.

In the States

Throw Out the Mattress

Working with labor, business, and community groups, the West Virginia Education Association succeeded—with 78 percent of the vote—in passing a constitutional amendment that allows the state to invest public employee pension funds in a blend of stocks and bonds. Old language limited investments to low-interest bonds, sending pension plans into the red by more than $4 billion.

Pension Reform in Maine

The federal Appeals Court has overturned a lower court ruling that the State of Maine illegally raided its public employee pension fund in 1993. NEA is reviewing the case for possible appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court. Says Maine Education Association President Tim Humphrey: "This is a wake-up call for political action if there ever was one. Now, more than ever, we must stand together to protect our rights."

Arizona Fights Vouchers

The Arizona Education Association is backing a taxpayer-parent suit against the state's private and religious school tuition tax credit law, which goes into effect January 1. Says AEA President Kay Lybeck: "We believe the state cannot provide funds or aid to private or religious schools. It's that simple."

A New Professionalism

The New Jersey Education Association and Governor Christie Whitman have reached agreement on a professional development program requiring 100 hours of training for teachers, spread out over five years. The program will be overseen by new state, county, and local boards, each with a majority of teachers.

Some Very Smart Voters

In a voter survey conducted for the North Dakota Education Association, half of those polled agree that school funding is insufficient, and 71 percent back a proposal that the state bear 70 percent of the cost of public schools.

Time To Trust the Trustees

Coming soon to all state legislatures: a bill to boost your pension fund's assets and independence.

Would you entrust your retirement savings to your school board if you knew it was going to plow all your money into a low-interest passbook account?

Not likely. Yet, in far too many states, school employee pension fund investments are made by state officials who care more about short-term budget balancing than long-term fund growth—or who are bound by "legal lists" of conservative, low-yield investment categories.

For the average NEA member, that can mean higher employee pension contributions, inferior benefits, and the diversion of state "general" funds—that could repair leaky school roofs or bring down class sizes—to meet whopping pension obligations.

So big is the pension problem that the nonpartisan National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws has drafted legislation to modernize, clarify, and make uniform the rules governing public sector pension plans.

That legislation—known as the Management of Public Employee Retirement Systems (MPERS) Act—will be introduced in the upcoming session of *every* state legislature.

The conference, which for 102 years has crafted such universal laws as the Uniform Commercial Code, conferred with NEA and other public sector unions when drafting the bill.

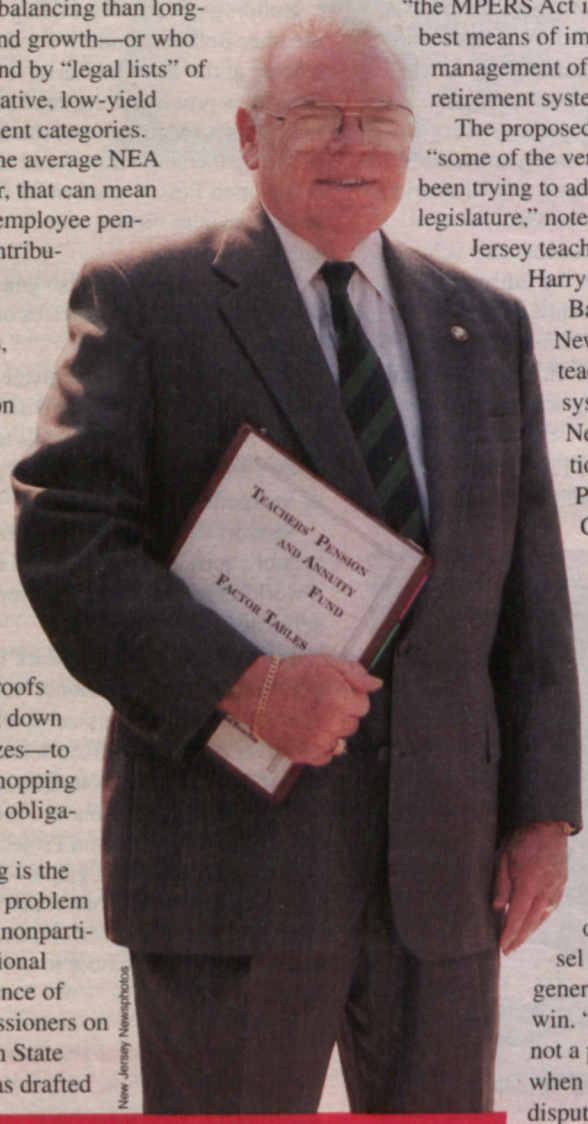
"In the absence of federal legislation," says NEA Government Relations Director Mary Elizabeth Teasley, "the MPERS Act is perhaps the best means of improving the management of public employee retirement systems."

The proposed law focuses on "some of the very issues we've been trying to address in our state legislature," notes retired New Jersey teacher and principal Harry Baldwin.

Baldwin chairs New Jersey's teacher retirement system and the New Jersey Education Association's Pension Policy Council.

An important issue for NJEA: pension system independence from the governor and legislature.

"Right now, our actuaries are hired by the state treasurer, and our only legal counsel is the attorney general," says Baldwin. "Normally, that's not a problem, but when our system has a dispute with the administration or another agency, there's a conflict of interest."



New Jersey Newsphotos

New Jersey educator Harry Baldwin leads the crusade for pension reform.

The MPERS Act would require that all fund assets be held in trust—a guiding principle under private sector pension law—and that trustees and other fiduciaries have *exclusive* control over retirement system assets.

Should politicians seek to withhold operational funding from a retirement system or underfund its obligations, explains NEA researcher Stan Wisniewski, the law would allow trustees to "create their own budget out of the assets and hire their own actuaries and attorneys to fight back."

Among other things, the MPERS Act would also:

- **Abolish laws in many states that impede, or even prevent, modern investment practices.** The MPERS Act would permit fund trustees to diversify investments as needed, across a broad array of holdings—from municipal bonds to international stocks.

The higher yield "could be used to fund additional retirement benefits or reduce pension contributions for employees and employers," Wisniewski points out.

- **Establish solid reporting and disclosure requirements for retirement systems**—using everything from published and circulated reports to open meetings.
- **Spell out duties for trustees and fiduciaries**—including loyalty to system participants, prudence, and the sole motivation of "providing benefits and paying reasonable expenses."

Baldwin, who has been a retirement system board member for more than 20 years, says that passage of the MPERS Act in New Jersey will be a "difficult and uphill battle, because it involves a transfer of power."

But, adds the former health and physical education teacher, "When this bill becomes law, it will go a long way toward protecting retirees' rights."

For More Information

Call NEA researcher Stan Wisniewski at 202/822-7423 or send an E-mail message to SWisniewski@nea.org.

The Bottom Line

Families and child care: Just 4 percent of employees in America are eligible for child care benefits from their employer. Considerably more need access to care. Overall, 12 million children under six have both parents or their only parent in the workforce.

Protecting young children: Only 17 states have "minimally acceptable" standards in place for infant and toddler child care, say researchers from Yale University. The Yale research did not examine how well states enforce the standards that are on the books.

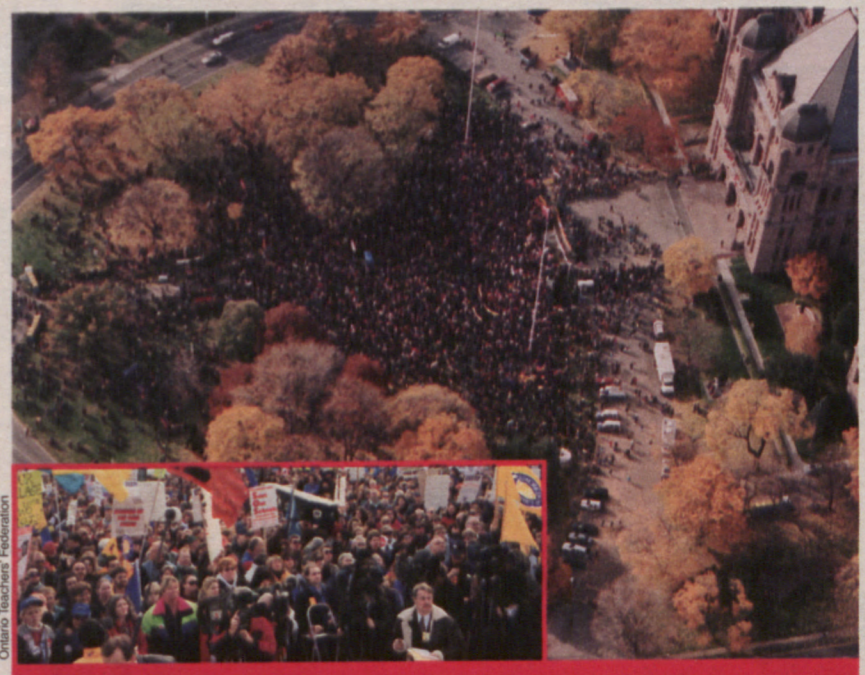
Bus safety: Public school systems in Connecticut and Virginia have begun painting little yellow buses on sidewalks at bus pick-up points. The sidewalk images, say researchers, help keep kids waiting for school buses farther from the street.

Gay students: Ten of every 100 students, reports the *Christian Science Monitor*, say they are chronically abused by their peers, with gay teens the most frequent bullying targets. Gay youths are four times more likely to commit suicide than other teens.

Around the World

Walking Out for Democracy

Even some school board members backed the largest teachers' protest in North American history. Here's why.



Ontario Teachers' Federation

As teachers in Ontario walked picket lines to protest a law that strips local control and cuts educational quality, 35,000 supporters (above) rallied in downtown Toronto.

They were joined on the picket line by hospital employees and auto workers, fed by local business owners, and encouraged by honking motorists, parents, and even many school board members. Not your ordinary teachers' walkout.

But the autumn "political protest" of 126,000 K-12 teachers in Ontario, Canada, challenged something quite extraordinary—a provincial law that eliminates teachers' right to bargain over working conditions and gives provincial authorities, not local school boards, authority over education.

When the Progressive Conservative government of Premier Mike Harris introduced Bill 160, something began to stir a populace beaten down by two years of massive social service cutbacks designed to deliver a 30 percent provincial income tax cut.

After slashing $710 million in education funding—which drove up class sizes and wiped out many programs—Harris took to the airwaves to scapegoat public schools for alleged failures. He then pledged to trim "fat" by cutting another $469 million.

To meet that goal and control local school spending, Harris's government rammed Bill 160 through the legislature. Among other things, the law strips school boards of taxing power, limits bargaining to salaries and benefits, and allows boards to use more lower-paid, non-certified teachers.

As Bill 160—improbably named the Education Quality Improvement Act—moved through the legislature in late fall, members of five unions affiliated with the Ontario Teachers' Federation hit the street for 10 days.

"Not one of us is happy to be on the street. It goes against the grain," said Randall Lobb, a media teacher at the Goderich (Ontario) Collegiate Institute. "But there seems to be no other way to let a scheming government know what democracy means."

Several school boards refused to seek injunctions against the unions. And some went further:

- The Kapuskasing school board allowed picketing teachers to set up an office in its conference room.
- Halton board chair Linda Glover said, "I believe Ontario teachers are doing what every trustee and board in this province should be doing."
- Frontenac County board chair D. Ross Drummond declared: "Bill 160 and the government's method of ramming it through are destroying the future partnership of teachers and government to make a better system that will work for our children."

Parent groups condemned Bill 160, and polls showed that almost 70 percent of the population supported the teachers. Even the Chamber of Commerce advised Harris that he had gone too far.

The Canadian labor movement sent funds and members to support teachers on the picket line. And the Canadian Auto Workers union—which threatened to shut down production plants if teachers were legally penalized for the walkout—joined with the United Steelworkers union to sponsor a rally of 35,000 people in Toronto.

Protests notwithstanding, the Progressive Conservative Party holds a sizeable majority in the provincial legislature. Bill 160 was signed into law, and teachers went back to their classrooms.

But the campaign against the law continues in legal and political arenas.

Says Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation staffer David Moss: "Wherever this battle ends, the Conservatives have succeeded in building the largest anti-government coalition ever in this country.

"They have activated 126,000 Ontario teachers like never before in the political process," Moss adds, "and they will pay for passing this undemocratic law."

For More Information

You can follow developments in Ontario by going to the Canadian Teachers' Federation Web page at www.ctf-fce.ca.

Solidarity From NEA

Protesting Ontario teachers got a boost from NEA's top three officers, who called the walkout an "act of responsible civil protest."

"As we have found in the U.S.," the NEA leaders wrote, "one of the most important functions of teachers unions is not just to fight for economic justice for their members, but also to use their clout to oppose assaults on public education by ideologically driven opponents."

A Unique Opportunity

The NEA and AFT will host the Education International's World Congress in Washington, D.C., from July 24 to 28.

The Congress presents a chance for NEA members to meet some 1,000 representatives from 275 education employee unions in 150 countries around the world.

If you're interested in joining the NEA delegation, contact your state affiliate or NEA International Relations, 1201 16th Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20036, 202/822-7488, Fax 202/822-7974. Send E-mail to oir@nea.org. The deadline for applications is January 31.

Algerian Teachers Killed

To date, 125,000 people are reported to have been killed in civil disorders in Algeria, about 60 of whom were teachers. A 1992 government decision to cancel an election—that seemed about to bring the Islamic Salvation Front to power—led to a civil war. Intellectuals, trade unionists, and teachers have been targets of the violence.

Hands Across the Water

Hands Across the Water is an NEA-endorsed, short-term international teacher exchange program. Educators from across the U.S. go to such countries as Australia, Japan, the Netherlands, and New Zealand and later host a visiting teacher from the same country. For information, contact Hands Across the Water, 606 Delsea Dr., Sewell, NJ 08080, 609/582-7000, Fax 609/582-4206. Send E-mail to erikm@eirc.org.

Minority teachers: Students from minority groups make up one-third of American school enrollment, but only 13 percent of teachers are minority. Hawaii is the only state with a higher percentage of minority teachers than minority students.

Test cheating: The nation's largest testing enterprise, the Educational Testing Service, is coming under fire for lax test-taking security. One recent scandal: Hundreds of college students paid as much as $9,000 for answers to the key graduate school entrance exam.

A computer in every backpack: Two Georgia public colleges—Clayton State and Floyd College—are giving notebook computers this fall to every faculty member and student, in the first-ever universal distribution of notebooks on non-residential campuses.

Media: Celebrities are dominating the news more than ever. The latest example: The 1982 auto accident that killed Monaco's Grace Kelly drew 24 total minutes of network news time the next five nights. The auto accident that killed Princess Diana drew 197.

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Bob Riha, Jr.

Innovators

Expecting The Best

Innovator: Jeff Howard

Job:
President, the Efficacy Institute

Bright Idea:
When it comes to smarts, some people have 'em, and some people don't. It's an entrenched dictum of American culture—and it's completely wrong, Howard insists.

Smart is something you can get.

Howard's organization works with about a dozen school districts around the country to boost student achievement. The objective: changing the emphasis from sorting by ability to expecting the best from every child.

"Public schools are set up on the assumption that a small percentage of kids have enough intellectual capacity to learn at high levels and most kids do not," he says. "That sends a debilitating message to most kids that they are ungifted and untalented."

Instead, when educators raise the bar to what Howard calls "21st century standards" for all students, kids rise to the challenge.

Educators are not to blame for our culture's belief in innate intelligence, Howard says, but they should stop going along with it.

Effecting real change will require engaging "parents, preachers, and community leaders of all stripes," Howard says. "No, you can't do it alone, but you can be leaders in mobilizing the community to get it done. There's no excuse for not taking that lead."

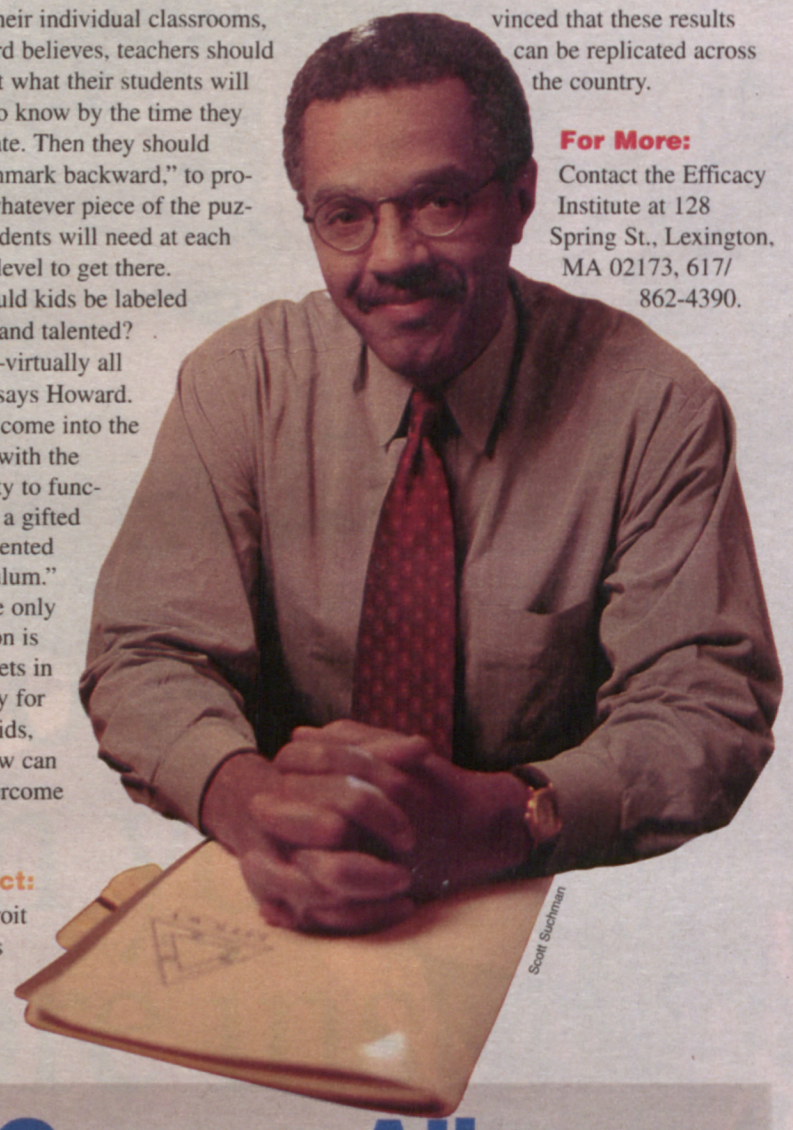
In their individual classrooms, Howard believes, teachers should look at what their students will need to know by the time they graduate. Then they should "benchmark backward," to provide whatever piece of the puzzle students will need at each grade level to get there.

Should kids be labeled gifted and talented? "Yes—virtually all kids," says Howard. "They come into the world with the capacity to function in a gifted and talented curriculum."

"The only question is what gets in the way for most kids, and how can we overcome that."

Impact:
In Detroit schools that underwent Efficacy Institute training, third graders gained 12 points in reading and 19 points in math on the California Achievement Test. Howard's convinced that these results can be replicated across the country.

For More:
Contact the Efficacy Institute at 128 Spring St., Lexington, MA 02173, 617/862-4390.


Scott Suchman

Native Culture Comes Alive

Innovator: Sharon Cale

Job: Elementary teacher, Stonington Elementary, Little Deer Isle, Maine

Carl D. Walsh

Bright Idea:
"They're all dead."

When Cale asked a student for his perceptions of Native Americans, that was his simple summation. So Cale decided to bring them alive in rural Maine.

Using a grant in part from the National Endowment for the Arts, Cale traveled with two elders from local tribes to eight celebration gatherings in Maine and neighboring regions.

Cale filmed cultural activities highlighting Native American dance and art. She tracked centuries-old migratory communication networks among the Penopscot, Passmaquoddy, Mailsett, and Micmac native tribes that once populated the island shores.

Cale then created displays for local schools and businesses, provided a resource packet to area teachers, and donated materials to the local library.

"I want students to know we're more alike than different," says Cale, who is part Cherokee, "and erase the suspicion and prejudice" between mainstream culture and native peoples.

Impact:
Native culture is no longer "dead." "Students now say, 'We'd like to know these people,'" Cale reports.

For More:
Contact Cale at P.O. Box 127, Little Deer Isle, ME 04650.

Vouchers & The Rich

"Fran Lebowitz on Race," Vanity Fair, *October 1997.*

"The famously contrarian humorist spells it out in black and white," notes Vanity Fair. *Lebowitz regards school vouchers as "a genuinely diabolical plan and one that, if instituted, would result in the end of any sort of democratic society."*

Here, Lebowitz addresses the question: "Traditionally, education is seen as the only real solution to the problems of black children. Do you think this still holds true?"

"Absolutely—look how well it's working for white children. . . . Recently a business magazine devoted an issue to [the subject of vouchers] and used black parents who wanted school vouchers to argue their case for them.

It's so profoundly deceitful for rich people to ask 'Why should rich people be the only ones to send their children to private school?' when the answer is so plainly that they have the money.

So serviceable, in fact, is this answer that for the edification of these bewilderingly bewildered millionaires I offer it also as the clear explanation to the centuries-old riddle of why only rich people own Sargent portraits, vintage Daimlers, and beachfront property.

These black parents are decoys, to distract your attention from what the Voucherites are doing—which is lowering taxes. School vouchers are advantageous because they would result, ultimately, in no public school system at all—there's no free lunch in a totally free market.

School vouchers are, for readers of such a magazine, about lowering taxes. Life, for these readers, is about lowering taxes.

They look constantly for the cause of taxes the way oncologists look for the cause of cancer, and, like surgeons, cut them out whenever possible, even at the expense of what you might previously have thought of as a vital organ. The public school system—what an obvious cause of taxes, what a drain it is on our hard-earned capital."

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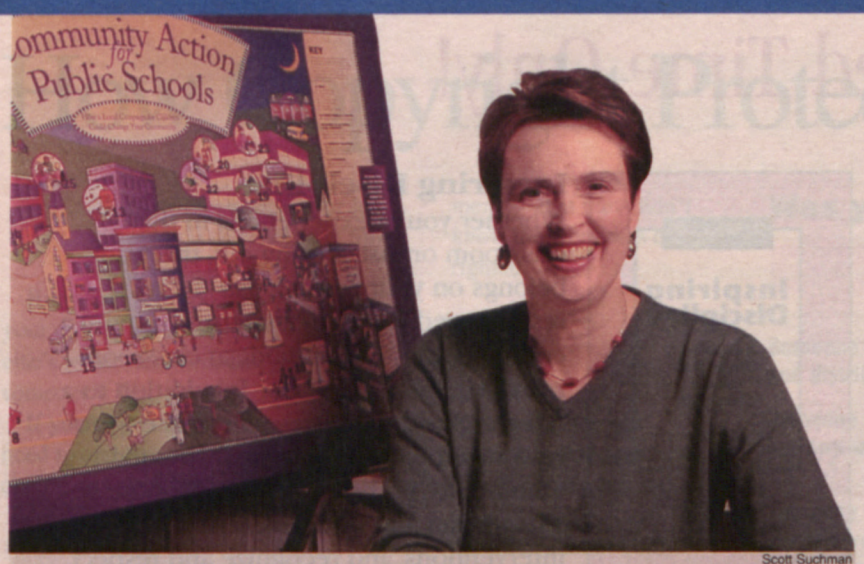

Scott Suchman

Parent Involvement: *More Than* **Kids' Play**

Anne Henderson of the Center for Law and Education studies the link between parental involvement and student achievement. In Learning from Others: Good Programs and Successful Campaigns, *Henderson helps to profile 60 programs that engage low- and moderate-income parents in their children's learning.*

Why does parental involvement drop off as kids get older?

This is treacherous territory. Most of the research shows a very sharp drop between elementary and middle school. First of all, kids have changed schools. School is usually farther from home, it's bigger, and your kid has many more teachers. How do you get to know them all?

Then, there are all these bogus messages out there in our culture, telling parents it's time to let go and stay away. And parents do.

The middle schools that do well—with more than parental involvement—tend to be broken down into smaller sub-communities, like teams or houses. The teachers work in teams as well, with one teacher responsible for communicating with parents, so parents have one point of contact.

As for high school, parents who don't understand how the system works can get lost at this point. It's very important that parents be aware of what their children need to be taking to get into college or technical school. Schools rarely give this information to parents, particularly in low-income communities

Any other findings for low-income students?

Mobility rates drop significantly in schools with good parental involvement programs. Parents are going to stick with schools that they think are doing a good job with their kids.

Any mistakes to avoid when developing a parent involvement program?

Yes. There are well-meaning forms of parental involvement where the school's idea is, "We need these families to become less dysfunctional. We need them to be better parents, so let's offer parenting classes, or substance abuse prevention, or teen pregnancy prevention."

You're assuming the worst about families—and that the school should fix them. It doesn't work. Parents will stay away from these programs in droves. They don't want to be talked down to. They want respect.

What can educators do to facilitate family-school partnerships?

They need to build comfortable, close relationships with their kids' families. Probably the best way to start is to think about what you like about each child—what is good about them. When you meet with the family, lead off with that, because they will respond to you if they think you know and like their child. You'll have an ally.

What's crucial in getting parents involved in their child's education?

The most important factor is the schools' policies and procedures. If schools promote involvement, it happens. If they don't promote it, it doesn't.

Lessons from the **Court**

Innovator: Don Sabo

Job:
Professor of sociology, D'Youville College, New York

Bright Idea:
"Today, boys have come up through school systems that have girls' teams and lots of co-ed athletic activities," says Sabo, author of *Sex, Violence, and Power in Sports: Rethinking Masculinity* (The Crossing Press). This "desegregating social experience" gives boys and male coaches more respect for girls' athletic ability.

By expanding opportunities for girls, Title IX has given boys more sports options than football, baseball, and basketball—and contributed to a cultural shift that values fitness over brute strength, says Sabo, a former Division I linebacker.

Yet, Sabo claims, "there's still a tremendous distance to travel" in leveling the playing field. For one, men receive $184 million more in college athletic scholarships than women.

And the underlying mentality is unfortunate, says Sabo.

He has found that boys and girls from suburban and rural areas who participate in high school sports perform better academically and are more likely to go to college than non-athletes.

Impact:
"We can use sport as an educational vehicle to prepare boys for life with women in the 21st century, or we can fill boys' heads with 19th century stereotypes," Sabo says. "We can choose equal opportunity for our daughters as well as our sons, or we can continue to overly privilege men's sports and rob women in the process."

For More:
Contact Sabo at D'Youville College, 320 Porter Ave., Buffalo, NY 14201, or E-mail sabo@acsu.buffalo.edu.

Mark Mulville

Do You Know **Your Students?**

One component of quality teaching is demonstrating an understanding of students' skills and knowledge, notes author/educator Charlotte Danielson. Here are the characteristics that rank levels of performance:

Unsatisfactory: Teacher displays little knowledge of students' skills and knowledge and doesn't indicate that such knowledge is valuable.

Basic: Teacher recognizes the value of understanding students' skills and knowledge but displays this knowledge for the class only as a whole.

Proficient: Teacher displays knowledge of students' skills and knowledge for groups of students and recognizes the value of this knowledge.

Distinguished: Teacher displays knowledge of students' skills and knowledge for each student, including those with special needs.

Source: *Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching* by Charlotte Danielson. ASCD, $19.95.

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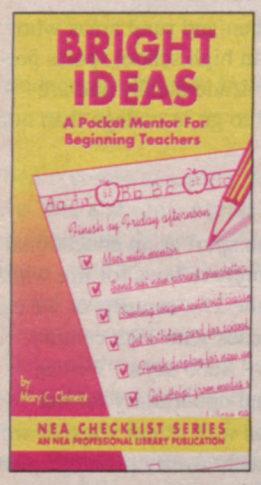
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Want to learn 15 tips on how to prepare personally and professionally for your first teaching job? Would you like 5 winning ideas for opening lines of communication with parents? Looking for new techniques to create a workable classroom management plan? You'll find all this, plus 42 tips for new teachers gathered from the Internet, and more in this user-friendly, pocket-size book of checklists.

56 pp., 1997, Stock #2153-3-00-D
Non-members $5.95, NEA Members $4.50 each or
2 for $8.00 (Use Stock #2153-3-0S-D for special price.)

Pitfalls and Potholes

Order one for yourself and a friend!

This handy guide will help you avoid many of the mistakes new teachers say they wish someone had told them about in college. The user-friendly checklist format makes it easy for you to grasp the nuts and bolts of landing a job, managing student conduct, getting along with administrators, maintaining personal priorities, avoiding law suits, and much more.

56 pp., 1997, Stock #2151-7-00-D,
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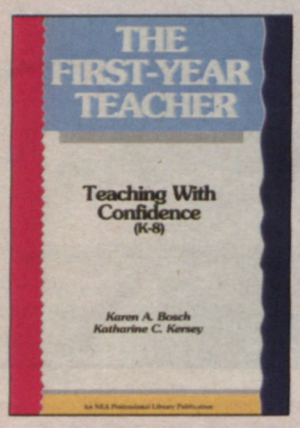
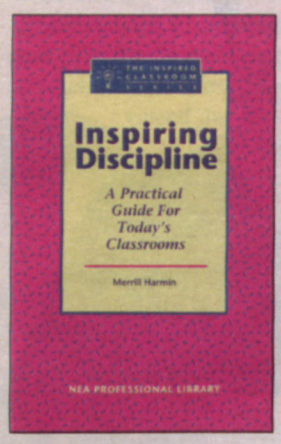


The First-Year Teacher: Teaching with Confidence (K–8)

This easy-to-read handbook will guide you as you tackle your first year in the classroom. The unique 30-day management plan presented here gives you time-saving ideas that "only experienced teachers know." Don't let your first year slip by without getting your copy of this best seller.

144 pp., 1994, Stock # 1862-1-00-D,
Non-members $18.95, NEA Members $14.95



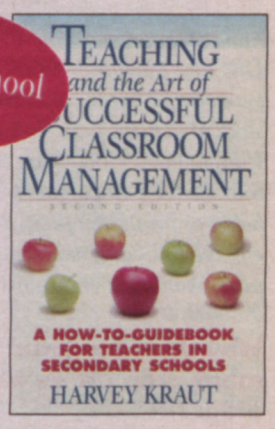
Inspiring Discipline

Whether you're experienced in the classroom or just starting out, this book belongs on your reading list! Today's restructured, diverse classrooms require a confident mastery of modern classroom management techniques. In addition to a unique glossary of strategies, this easy-to-read volume shows you how to build community in the classroom, dissolve antagonism and resentment, use positive interventions, and recognize and respect people's limits. The broad-base of behavior management strategies in this best seller will help you improve teaching and learning in your classroom.

128 pp., 1995, Stock #2950-X-00-D, Non-members $12.95, NEA Members $10.95

Teaching and the Art of Successful Classroom Management, 2nd. Ed.

A must for high-school teachers!


TEACHING and the Art of SUCCESSFUL CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT
SECOND EDITION
A HOW-TO-GUIDEBOOK FOR TEACHERS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS
HARVEY KRAUT

This new book shows you how to: establish rules, maintain the record book, plan the daily lesson, master questioning techniques, vary lesson types, teach across the curriculum, design meaningful tests, and avoid the end of term blahs. In addition, you'll explore real-life problem scenarios and find solutions that will help you cope with the unexpected. If you are a beginning high-school teacher, intern, or student teacher, this clear comprehensive guidebook can be your "launch pad" to mastery in the classroom!

128 pp., 1997, Stock #2004-9-00-D, Non-members $18.95, NEA Members $14.95

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Inside Scoop

How Copyright Protects Your Creations

After countless hours, your lesson plan on astronomy is finished—and it's fabulous.

But what if it's too good? What if your opus turns up as part of someone else's in-service workshop—or on someone's Web page?

If you're going to be creative, you need to understand how copyright law can protect your hard work.

What kinds of things can I copyright?

Pretty much anything you create that can be fixed in a tangible medium of expression.

Written works and music are most typical, but copyright protection also covers dramatic and choreographic works, computer programs, movies and other audio-visual works, sound recordings, sculptures, and pictorial or graphic works.

Web sites and multimedia creations are copyrightable, provided the content is your original work. If you create a multimedia collage featuring an image of Van Gogh's *Starry Night*, you can copyright everything but that image.

What kind of rights does copyright give me?

The Constitution sets up copyright as a balancing act between your right to control your creative output and society's right to the open exchange of ideas. So, while you can't have complete control over your work, the Copyright Act gives you the exclusive right to reproduce, distribute, perform, or display it, or to prepare derivative works based on your original.

These rights give you the power to license, sell, or receive royalties for your creative output.

How do I get a copyright?

You may already have one! Before 1988, your work wasn't protected unless it had a copyright notice on it. Now, copyright protection exists from the moment your work is fixed in a tangible form—including when you click the save button on your computer.

Courts are also recognizing that, although cyberspace is an ephemeral kind of place, a Web page is a fixed format and thus protected.

While not necessary, a copyright notice is still a good idea. Otherwise, someone who improperly copies your work can claim "innocent infringement"—that they didn't know the work was copyrighted.

What does a copyright notice look like?

A proper copyright notice has three parts:

- the © symbol, the word "copyright," or the abbreviation "copr."
- the year
- your name.

So, all you have to do is put "Copyright 1997 Janet Jones" somewhere on your work, and you're set.

If you're copyrighting a Web site, spell out the word copyright instead of using ©, since a number of Web browsers will not display this symbol.

So I don't have to formally register with the U.S. Copyright Office to be protected?

Yes and no. Although anything you create in a fixed format is protected, there are some good reasons for officially registering.

If you register your work within three months of creation, you're entitled to seek statutory damages (up to $100,000), plus attorney's fees and court costs. If you wait until you're bringing a lawsuit to register, all you can receive are actual damages, which might be so nominal as to not be worth the trouble of suing.

Registering for a copyright involves paying a $20 fee, filling out a form, and submitting a copy of your work.

I want to share my work with colleagues, not restrict access to it. Does my copyright interfere with that?

It doesn't have to. It's up to you to claim infringement—so if you want people to freely copy something you've printed or sent out on the Internet, just let them.

Or, to be clear, add to the end of your copyright notice legalese such as: "Unlimited permission to copy or use is hereby granted subject to inclusion of this copyright notice," or "This material may not be duplicated for any profit-driven enterprise."

Was your copyright infringed?

Situation	Infringement?	Reason
Someone photocopies your lesson plan and distributes it at an in-service.	YES	The lesson plan is your original creative work.
Someone rewrites your lesson plan in her own words and distributes copies.	NO	Ideas cannot be copyrighted, only the original expression of ideas.
You write a training manual for food service workers but don't put a copyright notice on it. The district gets a hold of it and makes 200 copies.	YES	All original work—including manuals—is protected by copyright, even without a notice.
A short news story you wrote for the faculty newsletter appears almost verbatim in your town's paper.	MAYBE	Facts cannot be copyrighted. Most likely, you could not prove infringement.
Your cartoon from the faculty newsletter appears in your town's paper.	YES	Artwork is copyrightable.
You create a Web site on grammar called "Miss Mouse's Homework Helper." A month later, you see a math Web site with the same name.	NO	Names and titles cannot be copyrighted.

The law governing copyright infringement is complex. These examples illustrate individual situations and can't be extrapolated to all cases. For more exact details on the laws governing copyright, check the references listed below or the NEA Today Web site at www.nea.org/neatoday.

I have a great idea for a book I'd like to write when I retire. Can I copyright the idea now?

Sorry. Ideas cannot be copyrighted, only the original expression of a thought or idea.

It's a difficult distinction, but think of it this way: How many fewer movies would Hollywood produce if the idea "love story about two completely mismatched people" could be copyrighted?

What can't I copyright?

You cannot copyright a name, a short phrase, or the title of a work (although you may be able to trademark these).

You can't copyright a fact. For instance, someone else can write a lesson plan very similar to yours, using the exact same resources and methods, and not violate your copyright. Remember, only the original expression of your ideas is protected.

Is there anything I should worry about?

Yes. Many districts assert that they own anything their employees create for classroom use. Unfortunately, copyright law isn't clear here. To preserve their rights, some NEA members have negotiated copyright in their contracts.

Acceptable use policies also may limit your rights to work you create. Check your contract and acceptable use policy to be sure.

—Bonnie Gardner

Need More Information?

- To get a copyright registration form, check your local library or call the U.S. Copyright Office at 202/707-9100. Or download the forms from the Web at lcweb.loc.gov/copyright—you'll also find more on the nuts and bolts of copyright there.
- *The Copyright Primer for Librarians and Educators* is available from the NEA Professional Library. $20 for NEA members. Stock #1870-2-00-F. Call 800/229-4200 to order.
- The Electronic Frontier Foundation's primer for multimedia and Web developers offers advice on how to protect your rights—and not infringe on others' copyright. On the Web at www.eff.org/pub/CAF/law/ip-primer.

Students &

Good Stuff

Bully for No One
Every day, 160,000 students miss school because of their fear of bullies. In *Bullies & Victims: Helping Your Child Survive the Schoolyard Battlefield*, SuEllen Fried and Paula Fried discuss the many forms that bullying can take. They offer practical solutions—steps both the bullies and the bullied can follow to break free. 224 pp., $19.95 from M. Evans and Co.

Social Responsibility
In *Children's Social Consciousness and the Development of Social Responsibility*, Sheldon Berman shows that children's awareness of the social and political world emerges earlier than most think—and their social and moral abilities are more advanced than has been believed. Berman challenges educators to "hold out a vision of a more participatory, ethical, and caring society" despite the obstacles they may face. 254 pp., $17.95 from the State University of New York Press. Call 800/666-2211 to order.

A Guide to the Real World
In *A Student's Guide to Success in the Real World: Method to the Madness*, John Jell provides down-to-earth guidance on work experience and paying for school, the difference between a job and a career, and the importance of education to a person's future. Discounted price of $14.95 for NEA members. Includes a free teachers guide with every 10 copies purchased. Contact Real World Enterprises, P.O. Box 461840, Los Angeles, CA 90046, 213/656-6046, E-mail jjrealworld@aol.com.

Desert Facts
Of the more than 2,500 species of palm trees, only one is native to the North American West—the California fan palm. For more desert facts and lore, plants and animals, towns and ghost towns, check out *DesertUSA*, a monthly online magazine, at www.desertusa.com.

Guided Tour
A Is for Admission: The Ultimate Insider's Guide to Getting into the Ivy League and Other Top Colleges offers an insider's look at the admissions process from Michele Hernandez, a former admissions officer at Dartmouth College. 256 pp., $24 from Warner Books.

You know you have a problem when . . .

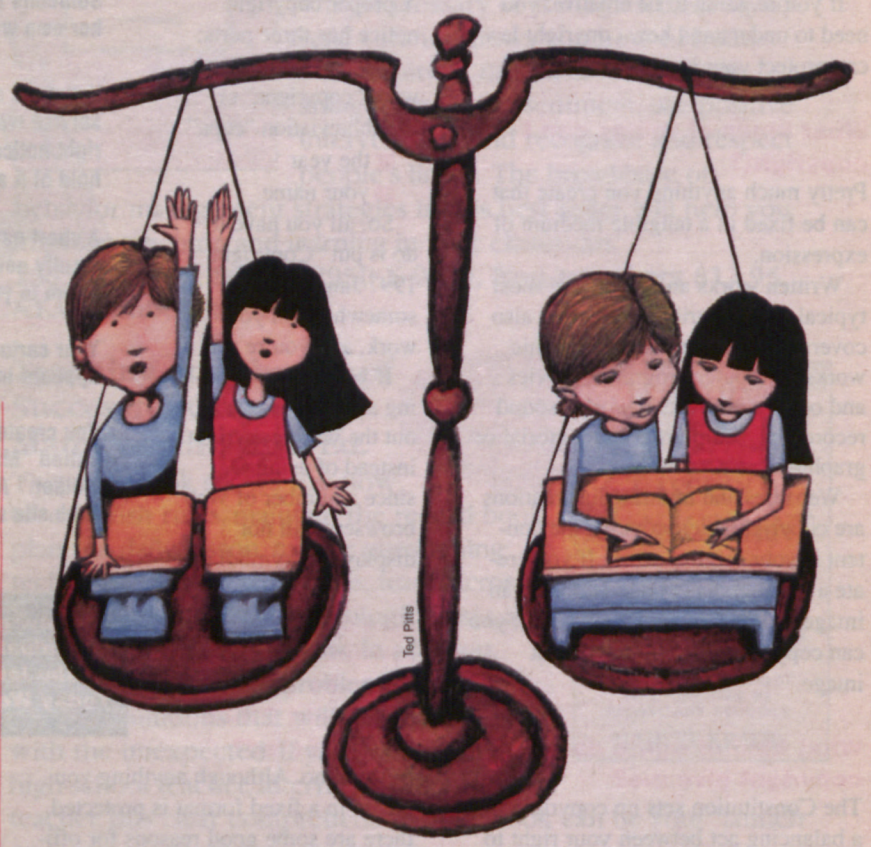
"You spend a lot of time on just a few students—and not enough time on the majority of students."

Jerry Teska, high school math teacher, Watertown, Wisconsin

Dilemma

Me First, You First

How do you balance competition and cooperation in the classroom?



I encourage students in my chemistry class to work in small groups quickly, efficiently, and accurately to find answers or experimental results.

As students complete the activity, they write their names and results on the blackboard, in the order that they found the answer. When everyone is finished, they all discuss the class's result and correct each other's errors.

Students then hand in their original answers and an explanation of any changes from the class's discussion.

This approach fosters a healthy competition for the top spot on the blackboard. And it promotes cooperation in striving for a correct answer that the entire class can agree on.

Anne Marie Weeks
High school chemistry teacher
Sherburne, New York

My students do 35 percent of their tests in groups and the remainder alone. I have strict group rules—the key being silence, since the part done in groups varies from test to test. To communicate, students write notes.

During a geometry course one year, a group got really good. They prepared a long list of terms, and whenever they needed to communicate, they simply pointed to the list.

I've had to cool off a few arguments, but group work improves students' performance and enhances their ability to work with others.

Ira Lee Riddle
High school math teacher
Warminster, Pennsylvania

My students enjoy competition. To encourage cooperation as well as competition, I often divide the class into two or more teams for academic relay races, scavenger hunts, puzzles, and trivia questions.

Cooperation is shown as students help and encourage their teammates. Enthusiasm is created through competition.

I try to see that each student is on a winning team several times each semester.

Marjorie Rios
High school Spanish teacher
Livingston, Tennessee

To de-emphasize competition, my class creates a chart focusing on the characteristics of good people and team skills. This helps students learn and recognize these skills in others.

When we're doing a group project, some students serve as observers, noting when a member uses a skill. After the activity, observers comment on the presence or absence of those skills.

Elizabeth Perkins
Fifth grade teacher
Arcanum, Ohio

Competition is a dirty word in my classroom. I have students work in pairs or groups—this helps to avoid comparing results or competing to finish first. I do not give students incentives for finishing before others or rewards for obtaining higher grades.

Competition in our overcompetitive society often bolsters self-confidence at the expense of others. For every winner, there is at least one loser.

Teachers should have a contest to see who can have the least competition in their classroom. Ready? Go!

George Gubbins
Technology instructor
Minooka, Illinois

Got an Answer?

What do you do when one child threatens to disrupt the learning of an entire class?

Send in your answer by regular mail, Fax 202/822-7206, or E-mail at dilemma2@neatoday.nea.org. Please include your name, educational position, and phone numbers.

All published respondents will receive a bright *NEA Today* mug.

Strategies

You know you've been successful when . . .

"It's the end of the school day—and the students don't want to go home!"

Cynthia Parello, first grade teacher, Hopatcong, New Jersey

Delight

Fired Up, Not Burned Out

Why everyone at Illinois's Willow Bend Elementary is showing up—happy.

Willow Bend Elementary in Palatine, Illinois, is on a high.

The school enjoys the highest attendance rate in the district—a whopping 97 percent—despite the highest student mobility rate.

Test scores have gone from the bottom third to the top third in the district, in a school with the highest percentage of low-income kids.

Discipline problems, adds media instructor Jan Belzer, are "nonexistent."

One formerly difficult student now shows up at 6:45 and asks custodians to let him in so he can get to work.

That kind of enthusiasm is widespread.

"I'm more engaged than I've ever been in my teaching career," says Belzer, a 21-year veteran.

The reason for this spark? Three years ago, Willow Bend reinvented itself.

When a successful bond issue sent a windfall Willow Bend's way, the school decided to spend the money upgrading its technology.

But before buying even one of the eventual 190 networked computers or 100 software programs, educators sat down and took a hard look at the school's practices. It was time, they decided, for a change.

They came up with a multi-age, thematic unit, team-teaching approach that has transformed the way students approach their learning—and the way teachers feel about their careers.

"The whole atmosphere has changed," says first and second grade teacher Tracy Hoskins. "The doors are open wider, and the kids have opportunities they've never had before."

Students and teachers have retooled the curriculum. They brainstorm about what students would like to learn, and then teachers winnow the ideas down into six thematic units, incorporating appropriate skills and learning objectives for each grade level.

Students spend two years in a multi-age classroom with the same team of educators, exploring units such as "Our Fragile Planet." There are no desks or textbooks.

Even the youngest students in this school of 500 conduct research on the Internet and create multimedia projects. Older children develop *20/20*-style TV programs broadcast to every classroom on topics like the abuse of animals in sports.

Computers and TV cameras aren't the only things that captivate students. Belzer says her media center is shelving 200 to 300 books a day, as students have become voracious readers.

Older students are busy helping the younger grades prepare electronic portfolios. They're busy creating multimedia presentations and tracking the stock market.

Willow Bend's new approach requires a lot of energy and flexibility from educators, but veterans like Belzer say it has been a shot in the arm.

Don Donahue, a fifth and sixth grade teacher who has been at Willow Bend since 1973, agrees. "When the opportunity to try this new approach came along, I was skeptical at first," he says. "But it gave me a new lease on life.

"I've always enjoyed teaching," he continues, "but I feel like I'm a kid again."

That energy rubs off on students.

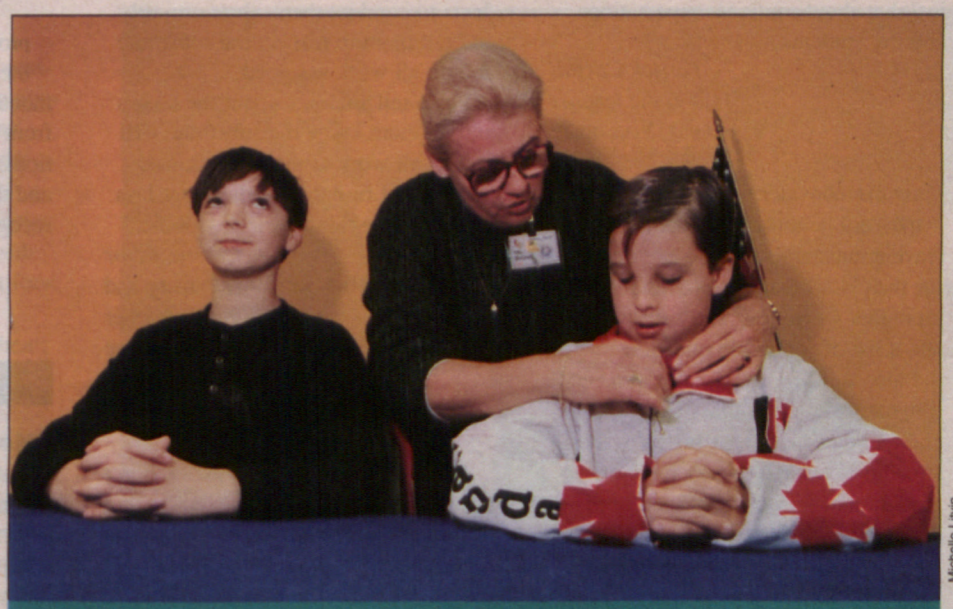
A visitor to Willow Bend once asked Belzer if the school had special acoustic tiles, for the halls were unusually quiet.

No, Belzer explained, the students are just engaged in their learning. They hustle from room to room like CEOs on the way to an important meeting. These are busy, busy kids.

—Bonnie Gardner

For More Information

Contact Jan Belzer at Willow Bend Elementary, 847/253-5896, or Uniserv Director Connie Norton at 847/359-0300.



Michelle Litvin

Media instructor Jan Belzer helps students prepare for their daily news show in the TV studio at Willow Bend Elementary.

Idea Exchange

Great Debates

To help my seventh grade students appreciate the steps needed to prepare well for a debate, I first have them prepare for a debate on their own with little instruction from me.

I give the students basic roles to play—presenter, rebuttalist, summation person—and time limits. The topic I assign is "Grammar: Do we need to learn it in school?"

I set up the teams and don't give students a chance to research the topic or select which side of the issue they'll argue. They need to work as a team to come up with arguments that convince others to agree with their assigned position.

After the debate, we decide which team had the best argument and why. The students quickly realize which types of arguments are most convincing. And both sides usually realize they would have felt better prepared if they'd had some research to back their positions.

This is a perfect lead-in to a formal debate on controversial issues selected by students. They're now willing to prepare properly and use debating skills that I teach them.

Sharon Schwartz
Allentown, Pennsylvania

Clean Measures

Each year during our study of liquid measurement, I give my second graders a homework assignment called "Math Bath." They're to take their plastic containers and measuring spoons and cups into the bathtub and practice measuring, for example, how many teaspoons are in a cup.

The children love to surprise their parents with the silly assignment—and they really do practice their measuring skills!

Sharon Morgan
Cumberland, Maryland

Want More?

These tips are all from NEA's new E-mail service, Works4Me. It's weekly, and it's free! To sign up, just send an E-mail to lyris @list.nea.org.

- In the "subject" line, type: sign me up, NEA!
- In the message block, type: subscribe Works4Me
- Send the message.

To submit your own tip, E-mail it to: owner-Works4Me@list.nea.org.

Professional

Good Stuff

Tips for Beginners

Student teachers, beginning teachers, and teacher mentors will all find news they can use in *Bright Ideas: A Pocket Mentor for Beginning Teachers.* This compact, 56-page book offers pointers on communication skills, classroom management, cyberspace—and knowing how to say no when the workload gets too burdensome. $4.50 for NEA members from the NEA Professional Library, stock #2153-3-00-F. Call 800/229-4200 to order.

Eight Years Later

In 1989, teacher Kerrie Baughman's experiences were the focal point of Robert Bullough's study *First-Year Teacher.* Now educator and author have collaborated again on *'First-Year Teacher' Eight Years Later: An Inquiry into Teacher Development.* The book recounts the challenges of Baughman's job as she struggles with issues of collegiality, professionalism, and a desire to serve society. 207 pp., $17.95 from Teachers College Press, 800/575-6566.

Learning from Each Other

In *Teacher to Teacher: Learning from Each Other,* Eleanor Duckworth joins 13 other teachers in relating the thoughts and ideas they shared at Harvard University's one-year Experienced Teachers Program. Designed "for teachers who want to become better teachers," the program helped seasoned educators work through issues even as, one notes, they were "being struck by just how complex teaching and learning is." 163 pp., $18.95 from Teachers College Press, 800/575-6566.

'Reformed' Schools

Lessons from Restructuring Experiences: Stories of Change in Professional Development Schools describes the process of collaborative educational reform in the context of the professional development school model. First-person stories relate how "reformed" schools and universities look and assess the impact of such reform on students, teachers, and colleges of education. 326 pp., $19.95 from the State University of New York Press. To order, call 800/666-2211 or visit the Web at www.sunypress.edu.

You know you have a problem when . . .

"No one talks to one another—school ends at 2:00, and the building is empty by 3:00."

Ethel Roberts, high school English teacher, Glenelg, Maryland

Dilemma

While You Were Gone

How do you prepare a substitute to take over in your absence?

Ted Pitts

I prepare a folder containing my daily and weekly schedules and assignments, plus opening, attendance, and dismissal procedures, fire drill directions, the class list, seating chart, and a list of students who need special attention.

On the front of this folder, I list the administrators, the two next-door neighbors, and student helpers.

I add the district's Code of Conduct Book and classroom management tips that I use. I put a map highlighting restrooms, faculty lounge, cafeteria, nurse's office, and specialist rooms.

Finally, I leave the substitute a thank-you note and best wishes for a good day. I also ask the substitute to leave a note describing the experience.

Carol Wright
Fifth grade teacher
Wilmington, Delaware

Whenever possible, I make an audiocassette, walking the substitute through my plans and giving insights about routines, expectations, and my students.

Patrick Carroll
Sixth grade teacher
Waukesha, Wisconsin

I always consider that the substitute may not be a trained teacher. So, I leave a magazine article—not unusual for the class I teach—relating to the topic that we are currently studying and a list of follow-up questions.

I also sub-proof my classroom. Since my subject is classified "special," I do not issue textbooks to the students. I have 29 books for third graders that they usually keep in their desks. But when I'm expecting a sub, I collect and secure them.

Barbara Steiner
Middle school family and consumer sciences teacher
Cambridge, Maryland

I call the substitute and discuss exactly what to do, from roll call to classroom activities. I instruct students to conduct themselves properly and tell them to respect the substitute and do all work assigned.

I also tell students about the lesson and let them know the substitute will collect all work at the end of class. With this, I find that students are less likely to give the substitute trouble.

Lynette Tabor
High school chemistry and biology teacher
Memphis, Tennessee

Ask, "Have you ever seen *The Longest Day*?"

Patrick Bates
High school theater teacher
Sterling Heights, Michigan

If I know in advance, I invite the substitute to ride the route. With sudden notice, I give the driver a map of the route indicating stops, number of pick-ups, and time of the first stop. Whenever possible, I go over details of the first few stops. In addition, I give the sub the name of a reliable student to call on for directions.

Shane Lucking
Bus driver
Spring Valley, Wisconsin

I invite the sub to my class and go over what's expected. I have my daily schedule on the computer with specific information on special activities.

I give the sub a chart listing students' names and responsibilities. I also leave a folder of special activities in all subject areas in case the sub can't follow the plan I left.

Jackie Wooten
Fourth grade teacher
Stokes, North Carolina

I provide schedules, a school map that includes storage areas, fire drills, a monthly calendar, a two-page memo from the district on teacher expectations, a page on earthquake procedures, and the packet on the Alaska statute on recognizing and reporting child abuse.

Barbara Yanoshek
Elementary art teacher
Anchorage, Alaska

Got an Answer?

How do you get your colleagues to understand the work you do?

Send your answer to *NEA Today* by regular mail, fax 202/822-7206, or E-mail (dilemma2@neatoday.nea.org). Please include your name, educational position, and phone number.

Growth

You know you've been successful when . . .

"Someone is complaining that you want to change things at school."

Elizabeth Riback, seventh grade teacher, San Lorenzo, California

Delight

Substitutes Take the Helm

In Wisconsin, subs get some basic training first, as part of a program created by NEA members.

If the flu lays Wisconsin teachers low this winter, they'll know their students will be in good hands, thanks to a new statewide training program for substitutes spearheaded by the Wisconsin Education Association Council.

The Substitute Teacher Professional Development Project takes substitute wanna-be's who lack teaching certification through the essential skills they'll need to head up a classroom with confidence.

The project, the brainstorm of English teacher Fred Poss, has trained close to 200 substitutes since last summer.

"It started out as an idea in my head because I was mad," says Poss, who teaches at Eau Claire's Memorial High School. About two years ago, during a funding crisis, Wisconsin's school districts got the go-ahead to drop the certification requirement for substitutes and hire anyone with a bachelor's degree.

The change was heralded as a cost-saver for districts, who could pay non-certified subs as little as $45 a day. That "bargain" outraged Poss, then chair of WEAC's Instructional and Professional Development Committee.

How can schools attract good substitutes, he asked, when even fast food restaurants pay better?

"It was a knife directed at the heart of our profession," Poss says. "I gave myself permission to fight that."

With a grant from NEA's National Foundation for the Improvement of Education and help from the WEA Professional Development Academy, Poss marshalled the state Department of Public Instruction, administrators, schools boards, and the state PTA to help develop criteria and a training program for non-certified subs.

Involving so many stakeholders in the project's development has been key to its acceptance.

"It hasn't been seen statewide among superintendents and administrators as strictly a union-driven program," explains WEAC staffer Deb Berndt. "That has given us a credibility that we might not have had, at least initially."

School districts contract with the Professional Development Academy to provide day-long and half-day workshops for prospective, non-certified subs. The academy, in turn, hires veteran substitutes—those with "strong academic, professional, and experiential qualities," Poss says—to conduct the training.

That includes veterans like Tom Gilding, a middle school teacher for 17 years and a sub since 1991.

Gilding stresses the importance of professionalism to workshop participants. "I get the feeling that some people who go into substituting think it's an easy day," he says. "It's not easy. It's a very challenging, responsible situation."

Workshops begin with safety issues and procedures for handling school site emergencies.

"I talk about first aid, OSHA requirements for blood-borne pathogens, where the barf bag is," says Gilding, recalling his first day in the classroom, during flu season. "Things like that can make or break you."

Then participants learn teaching basics. Says Poss: "You have to show these people what the heck a lesson plan is, because they don't know. Then we get to things people don't always know that are essential, such as how to interact with teachers, how to interact with administrators."

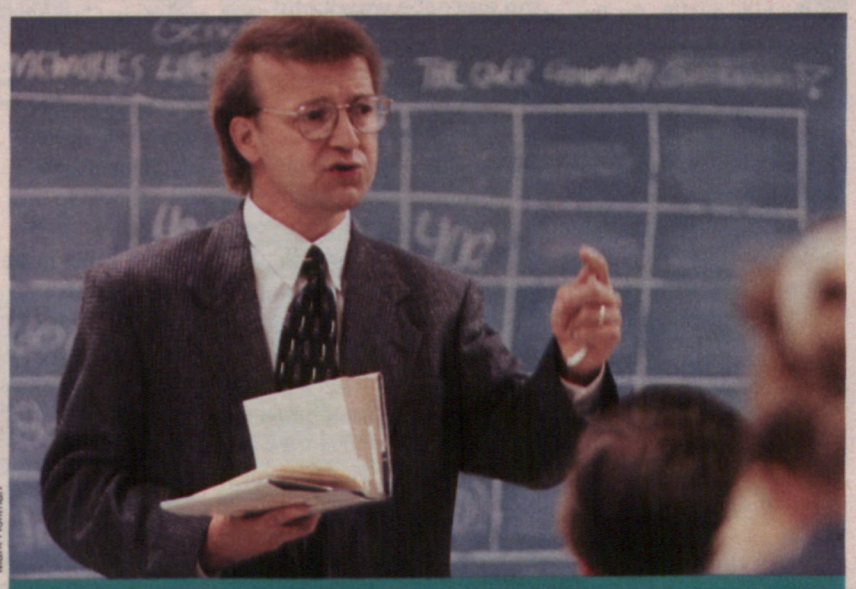
While the use of non-certified subs is probably here to stay, Poss hopes that workshop completion becomes an expected credential for them.

"It is a recognized mark for a résumé, and we want school districts to look for that," he says.

—Bonnie Gardner

For More Information

Contact Deb Berndt, director of WEAC's Professional Development Academy, at 608/276-7711.



Mark Hoffman

Substitute teaching is "a very challenging, responsible situation," says Tom Gilding, a 17-year teaching veteran and now a substitute who trains other subs in Wisconsin.

Idea Exchange

A Good Start

In our district, building administrators and representatives from the North St. Paul-Maplewood-Oakdale Education Association work together to assign mentors for new teachers.

When we hire new teachers, we normally assign another teacher from the same discipline or grade level to assist them. They are available to answer curriculum and classroom questions throughout the year in a supportive mentorship role.

We started this year with a meeting of the new teachers, with each new teacher accompanied by a veteran. After we presented a brief history of the contract and benefits, we provided a light lunch and door prizes. That meeting was followed by a workshop on parent-teacher conferences.

Dick Grossman
Maplewood, Minnesota

A Good Contract

The regular staff development programs provided by our district have offered limited spaces, and many teachers could not participate. So last year, we won in our contract a requirement that allows teachers to take 45 hours of class time in professional development programs to earn three credits and a salary increase of $500.

Now schools can create their own programs to meet specific needs.

A reading specialist teacher at one elementary school has set up reading and creative writing workshops around children's literature.

Some schools have developed programs to teach members how to use the Internet, create graphics, and write proposals.

Each credit requires 15 hours of class time. Teachers pay a small fee and attend classes on their own time.

Janice Mitich
Tucson, Arizona

Share Your Ideas

You can pass along your tips to *NEA Today*'s more than 2.2 million readers in one of four ways:

- By mail: *NEA Today*, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036
- By phone: 202/822-7201
- By fax: 202/822-7206
- By E-mail: Ideas@neatoday.nea.org

Bits & Bytes

Bytes for Beginners

Is there any software my school can install on its Web server to prevent kids from accessing inappropriate Internet sites?

"Blocking software" packages that restrict kids from inappropriate material on the Internet and that can run on network servers include Safe Surf, NetNanny, Surfwatch, and Cyber Patrol.

These programs come with databases of objectionable Web sites to be blocked. Since thousands of new sites appear on the Internet weekly, the programs block access if they find certain words in a site's URL.

But installing blocking software doesn't guarantee that students won't find objectionable content on the Net. The only fool-proof solution is to not allow students access to the Net via a "live" connection.

But that defeats the purpose of a school's having Internet access. So what's the answer?

■ **An informed school community.** Parents and school board members should understand that, with or without blocking software, students may come across objectionable material. They should also know that it's impossible to effectively monitor 100 percent of each student's time at the keyboard. You should make it clear, through a written acceptable use policy, that your school doesn't tolerate or condone intentional misuse of the Internet.

■ **Installing blocking software should be a community decision.** Many people believe blocking software is essential for ensuring that students use the Internet in an educational and secure manner. Others just as firmly believe that students should have complete access to the Internet at school, where they can learn responsible habits and navigating skills in a controlled setting.

What is critical is that communities and schools discuss this issue fully, and that students and parents understand their responsibilities—whether or not blocking software is used.

Have ideas, comments, or questions about technology? You can E-mail webeditor@dear.nea.org or write to Dear Webeditor, NEA Center for Education Technology, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036. Check out www.nea.org/cet on the Web for more Q&As.

Friendly User

Virtual World Travelers

Who:
Mary Jo Hilpert, ninth grade English teacher, South Mountain High School, Phoenix, Arizona

E-mail address:
mjhilpert@aol.com

What:
Hilpert has taken student exchange high tech, linking her classroom to a school in Chengdu, China.

Inspiration:
Hilpert and team teaching partner Lorene Ely thought their students had a lot to gain from working with Phoenix's Sister Cities Commission, which pairs Phoenix with eight cities around the globe for cultural, educational, and business exchanges.

Because the commission's Youth Ambassadors component can send only two dozen teens from all of Phoenix abroad each year, "we decided to build off the Youth Ambassadors program, but to give lots more kids the experience of meeting people and learning about other countries by using technology," Hilpert says.

Now, in a school where 65 percent of the kids qualify for free or reduced price lunch, Hilpert's students are becoming virtual world travelers.

Jeff Topping

Arizona teachers Mary Jo Hilpert and Todd Decker help two students who were part of a delegation to Chengdu, China, prepare an electronic travel journal that will be posted on their school's Web site.

Lesson:
With multimedia software, computers, and an Internet connection—acquired through a Road Ahead grant from NEA's National Foundation for the Improvement of Education—Hilpert and Ely, together with teacher Todd Decker, principal Clint Strickland, and Kate Ross from the Phoenix Sister Cities Commission, designed the "World Vistas" program. This interdisciplinary class combines English, world history, geography, and law.

Ely moved on to a district job this fall, and Hilpert continued "World Vistas" with an exploration of Chengdu, a Phoenix sister city of nine million in southwestern China.

Students used digital cameras to photograph the dedication ceremony of a bronze panda statue, a gift to Phoenix from Chengdu, and posted the images on the school's Web site.

Two students who were part of a Phoenix delegation to Chengdu this fall used multimedia software to publish their travel journals.

But high-tech student exchange began in earnest this fall with the signing of a formal agreement between South Mountain and a school of eighth to tenth graders in Chengdu.

"Four delegations of visitors from Chengdu came through our classrooms last year, including city officials and 30 students who shadowed our students for a day," Hilpert says. "And now, as a result, School No. 12 is our sister school.

"What we're aiming for is not just a school-to-school connection," she explains. "What we want is a classroom-to-classroom connection. We can use the technology we have in our school for students to reach out beyond the classroom walls."

Her students have exchanged written "day in the life" essays with their Chinese counterparts. Using digital cameras, the students plan to electronically exchange "walking tours" of their cities, as well as family photos and student autobiographies.

Next stop: the sister city of Hermosillo, Mexico, where Hilpert, Ross, and the World Vistas team have targeted another high school for an exchange partnership.

Hilpert also has her sights set on linking other classrooms throughout her school and district to sister cities.

"I can see us establishing E-mail between our students studying French and a classroom in our sister city of Grenoble, France, that is studying English," she says. "Our students would have a chance to learn about France not from a textbook, but from students living there."

Click:
"The best thing about this program is that it's replicable. There are high schools in every city, and there are Sister City Commissions in many of them," Hilpert says. "This kind of collaboration opens horizons to a high school that aren't opened in any other way."

For More Information

See what Hilpert's students are up to by visiting their Web site at www.south.acad.phxhs.k12.az.us. For information on sister cities programs, contact Sister Cities International at 703/836-3535 or on the Web at www.sister-cities.org.

Click Here

How Does Your School Rate?

How does your school measure up to others in using technology? A comprehensive picture of what schools are doing is now emerging, thanks to the work of a business-education alliance called the CEO Forum. The group is assessing the state of technology in the nation's public schools to ensure that tomorrow's workers will be well prepared for tomorrow's jobs. NEA's Center for Education Technology takes a look at this new ally for improving learning.

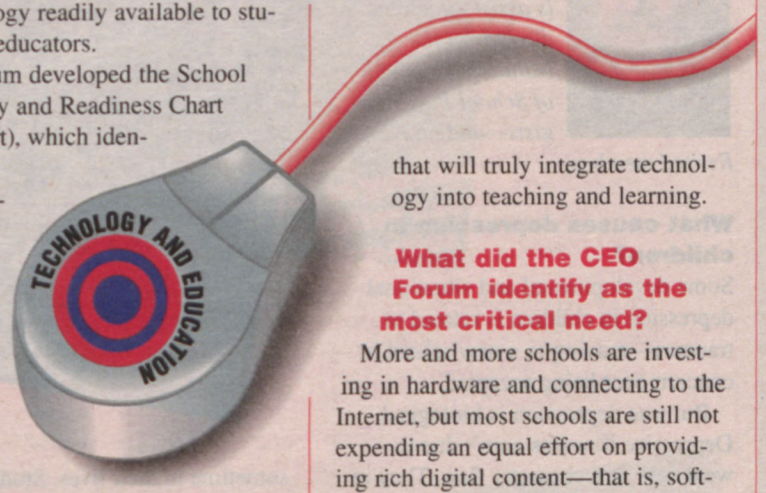
What is the CEO Forum?

The CEO Forum is made up of the top executives of 19 corporations and two education organizations—the NEA and the National School Boards Association. This group of leaders will meet regularly for the next four years to produce an annual report to the nation on the state of the integration of technology into public schools. Through its efforts, the CEO Forum hopes to keep momentum going to give schools—and educators—the tools they need to prepare students to succeed in the 21st century.

What does the CEO Forum have to say so far?

In its first report, released in October, the CEO Forum found that—despite the hype of recent times—our country is a long way from making the tools of technology readily available to students and educators.

The forum developed the School Technology and Readiness Chart (STaRChart), which identifies four school profiles, ranging from "Low Technology" to "Target Technology," to describe degrees of technology presence, use, and integration.



Applying data from 80,000 schools nationwide, the chart shows that 59 percent of America's schools have only limited and outdated technology, insufficient to permit student access to the learning opportunities technology can offer. A mere 3 percent of schools meet the profile for technology integration across the curriculum.

Can the STaRChart help my school?

Absolutely. The STaRChart can be used by teachers, administrators, school board members, and parents to identify their school's (or school district's) technology profile and to develop an education technology plan that will truly integrate technology into teaching and learning.

What did the CEO Forum identify as the most critical need?

More and more schools are investing in hardware and connecting to the Internet, but most schools are still not expending an equal effort on providing rich digital content—that is, software, CD-ROMs, laser discs, and other such resources. Nor are they providing training to teach educators how to incorporate technology into the curriculum.

The key to successfully using technology in our schools, says the CEO Forum, is to move away from thinking about any of the components individually—hardware, connectivity, software, and teacher training—and toward making all four fit together to enhance teaching and learning.

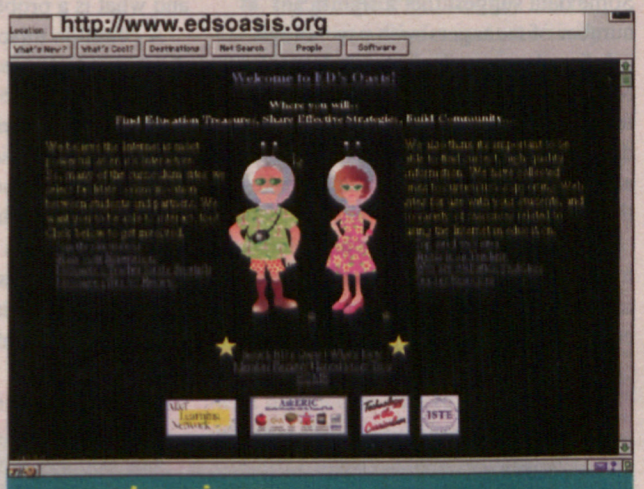
For More Information

For a copy of the CEO Forum's report and the STaRChart, point your browser to www.ceoforum.org.

Screen Shots

http://www.eyesoftime.com/teacher/index.htm
THE SCHOOL PAGE
Don't forget to create a bookmark for our site.
SafeSurf Rated
A Safe Site for all ages.
Featured
Click here to go there.
Visit This Month's
Hot Sites For Teachers
Build Your Professional Portfolio
Tips for putting a portfolio together
College Application Help
Help filling out College & University entrance applications

www.eyesoftime.com/teacher/index.htm
The School Page contains a wealth of resources for educators, including lesson plans, portfolio tips, a speakers registry, and grants information. The site also provides links to teaching resources grouped by discipline.


http://www.edsoasis.org
Welcome to ED's Oasis!
Where you will:
Find Education Treasures, Share Effective Strategies, Build Community

www.edsoasis.org
ED's Oasis has links to recommended student-centered Web sites that will engage kids in learning. This site features success stories from teachers, information on how to evaluate education sites, a discussion board, and more.

New & Noteworthy

'Mighty Math'
New software from Edmark, Mighty Math Astro Algebra, helps seventh to ninth graders learn order of operations, solve for unknowns, explore equations with a click-and-drag program, use a grapher-number line function, and solve problems with ratios, percentages, and proportions. The software supports NCTM standards and is available for $59.95 by calling 800/362-2890.

Online Guardian
Resources for Internet Parents, located at www.netparents.org, helps parents and educators make sure children have a safe time online. The site contains information on blocking software, child-safe Internet access, and Internet rating systems.

Term Paper Helper
The Research Paper site at www.researchpaper.com helps students connect an idea to an actual topic and then allows them to search the Internet for information. There's also a writing center that gives tips on polishing the final product.

Know Your Rights
If you're planning to publish student work on the Internet, first pay a visit to www.siec.k12.in.us/~west/online/copy2.htm. This site explains what steps you should take to protect students' privacy rights—and to protect yourself. There's also a sample permission form.

State Cornucopia
Almost anything you want to know about any of the 50 states can be found at www.scvol.com:80/States.

Learn To Surf the Net
Free online courses on the use of the Internet are being offered by E-mail from ICONect, at www.ala.org/ICONN/onlineco.html. Courses are offered at the basic and advanced levels and are designed for media specialists, teachers, and students.

Research in a Hurry
Global Access to Educational Sources is a cyberlibrary designed for students who need information off the Internet in a hurry. Among the topics covered are United States and world history, news, math, and science. Visit the library at www.cl.ais.net/jkasper.

Health

From the Network

The NEA Health Information Network suggests the following helpful resources.

Network on the Web

The NEA Health Information Network's new Web site (at www.nea.org/hin) is devoted exclusively to health issues affecting students and school employees, including the quality of air and drinking water in schools. NEA HIN materials are also available by calling 800/718-8387 or 202/822-7572.

More from NEA

Start the new year right with your own personal breast and cervical health calendar, which comes with monthly breast self-exam reminder stickers. And get a questionnaire to help you find out if your school does a good job in helping asthmatic students keep their condition under control and stay fully active. Both resources are free. For a copy, visit the NEA Health Information Network Web site at www.nea.org/hin or call 800/718-8387.

Get the Message

The Center for Substance Abuse offers technical assistance bulletins that provide information and practical suggestions for tailoring alcohol, tobacco, and other drug abuse prevention messages. For copies, contact the National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information at 800/729-6686 or visit its Web site at www.health.org.

The Parent Package

That's the name of a new resource from the American Medical Association that includes fact sheets on teens and injuries, cigarettes, alcohol, sex, nutrition, and a variety of other issues vital to healthy growth and development. For more information, contact the AMA Department of Adolescent Health at 312/464-5570.

Radon Fix-it Line

The Consumer Research Council offers a toll-free hotline service for consumers faced with high levels of radon in their homes. For information and assistance, call 800/644-6999.

The Lowdown on Depression

Kevin Dwyer, a nationally certified school psychologist, is assistant executive director of the National Association of School Psychologists—and an NEA-Retired member.

What causes depression in children?

Some developmental and situational depression in children is related to traumas—moving to a new school or concern over being accepted.

But true depression is biological. Depressive illnesses aren't due to weakness or a character flaw. They're biological illnesses related to imbalanced or disrupted brain chemistry.

A child who's biologically depressed is generally a child who has a genetic predisposition to depression and needs to be followed by a psychiatrist to ensure proper treatment.

Can depression be mistaken for other disorders?

A lot of kids who are depressed are misdiagnosed as attention deficit disorder—ADD—because symptoms can be similar. This misdiagnosis can be very problematic because the medications for each disorder are very different—and a child's symptoms of depression may be masked if they are being medicated for ADD.

What child and adolescent problems are related to depression?

Some data suggest that a significant number of teenagers with psychological disorders use alcohol and drugs. Males in particular are less likely than females to seek help when they are depressed and are more likely to use alcohol and drugs. This actually makes the depression worse.

Most adolescent suicides are related to depression or some kind of post-traumatic stress. A little over 11 percent of teenagers attempt suicide sometime in their lives. Studies show that girls attempt suicide more often then boys, with Hispanic girls attempting suicide more frequently than other girls.

Another behavior that has become more common is self-mutilation. Physical education teachers may encounter students who refuse to wear short sleeves in hot weather so no one will see scars on their arms.

Problems such as anorexia and bulimia are also related to depression.

What other signs of depression should educators look for in the classroom?

Look at a child's behavior in the context of that child's development and culture—some cultures may not speak up, give direct answers, or make frequent eye contact. Observe a child's behavior over a period of time to determine what is normal development and what is a problem.

A common misconception is that all depressed kids are shy and quiet. Although younger children manifest depression in different ways, including extreme shyness, some kids—particularly young males—will externalize their depression through hostility. They may have an anti-authority attitude and put themselves in situations where they are going to be rejected or hurt by other people.

These kids are often said to be "acting out." This is an overused and inappropriate way of discounting how a child gives signals that something is wrong—particularly when extreme behaviors are involved.

How can educators help a depressed child?

Educators should communicate their concerns to colleagues, school mental health professionals, and parents.

On a broader level, we should address this issue as a team within the school setting. We have problems treating children with major mental health disorders—everybody's working on it, but people aren't working together.

Here's how we can:

- In some cases there may be a private therapist who may not communicate with the school. Teachers should work with parents to communicate with that therapist to determine strategies for helping the depressed child in school.
- School mental health professionals such as counselors could be instrumental in facilitating this communication—they're more likely to know what kinds of questions to ask the therapist.
- Teachers are not responsible for deciding on therapy or medication for depressed children, but they can be very helpful in treatment by reporting back to the parents and psychiatrist about progress the child is making in school and any behavior changes during the therapy.
- The child should also be included in this process. Trust is a big component of treatment—a student should know what the teacher does and does not know.
- Schools can help depressed children by offering instruction in social skills and assistance on how to act in certain situations. Some depressed children have a hard time making and keeping friends, and this kind of service could help prepare depressed kids for other similar situations.

Resources

- The National Mental Health Association provides free information and materials on depression and more than 200 other mental health topics. It also provides referrals to local depression screening sites. Call 800/969-NMHA or visit the association's Web site at www.nmha.org.
- The National Association of School Psychologists offers a variety of publications on dealing with student depression in school settings. Its Web site (www.naspweb.org) offers resources for parents and educators. For more information, contact NASP, 4340 East-West Hwy., Suite 402, Bethesda, MD 20814, 301/657-0270.
- The American Psychological Association provides information on mental health as well as local psychologist referral. Its Web site (www.apa.org) offers resources on talking to children about violence and working with gay and lesbian youth. Contact APA, 750 First St., N.E., Washington, DC 20002-4242, 202/336-5500.

Rights Watch

What Role Does Race Play?

A case involving two NEA members has laid bare the debate over voluntary affirmative action.

By all accounts, this was a fight they didn't want. Sharon Taxman, who is white, and Debra Williams, who is African American, are NEA members who just want to teach.

But both have been conscripts in a monumental legal battle over affirmative action. Their case made its way to the U.S. Supreme Court—and grabbed headlines nationwide when it settled out of court on November 21.

It all began nearly nine years ago, in May 1989, when the Piscataway (New Jersey) Board of Education decided to eliminate one teaching position from the business department at Piscataway High School.

Under New Jersey law, layoffs have to be based on seniority. Taxman and Williams—the newest hires in the business department—had started work for the district on the same day, September 1, 1980.

So the school board compared the two teachers' classroom performance, evaluations, volunteerism, and certifications. It concluded that Taxman and Williams were "of equal ability and equal qualifications."

In past cases of a seniority tie, the board had simply flipped a coin or pulled numbers out of a hat to determine who got the ax.

This time, the board decided to invoke its affirmative action plan, retain the Black business teacher, and lay off the white business teacher.

The reason?

To maintain a racially diverse faculty, the board president would later testify.

Williams was the only African-American teacher in a 10-member, otherwise all-white business department, and the board felt that having at least one Black teacher would serve important educational purposes.

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission under the Bush administration disagreed and sued the school board, claiming a violation of Title VII—the federal law that bans employment discrimination. Taxman later intervened in the lawsuit.

In 1993, a federal district court ruled that the board's race-based layoff decision was illegal and awarded Taxman $144,000 in back pay and damages. (She had been recalled from layoff in 1991.)

Dear Ms. Taxman:
As Mr. Koch indicated to you in your conversation last Friday, the board of education has decided to rely on its commitment to affirmative action as a means of breaking the tie in seniority entitlement in the secretarial studies category. As a result, the board, at its regular meeting on the evening of May 22, 1989, acted to abolish one teaching position and to terminate your employment as a teaching staff member effective June 30, 1989.

Sharon Taxman (left) and Debra Williams started teaching in the same department on the same day. They have comparable credentials. Then Taxman was laid off, and both have been mired in a debate over affirmative action.

The Third Circuit Court of Appeals affirmed that decision in August 1996. Last year, the Supreme Court agreed to review the case.

Had the Court gotten its chance to issue a ruling, it would have provided a landmark decision.

In other cases, the courts have said that affirmative action is legal only as a temporary remedy for past discrimination by the employer or to correct a manifest racial imbalance in the employer's workforce.

This case raised the more difficult question of whether a school district can use affirmative action in a layoff situation to maintain "faculty diversity."

The Third Circuit said "no," despite recognizing that "the benefits flowing from diversity in the educational context are significant."

Had the Supreme Court agreed, it could have been the death knell for many voluntary affirmative action programs in schools.

In response to action taken by delegates to the 1997 NEA Representative Assembly (see sidebar), NEA filed an *amicus curiae* brief last August urging the Supreme Court to overturn the Third Circuit's "sweeping" and "categorical" ban on affirmative action to achieve or maintain a racially diverse faculty.

In its brief, NEA argued that, because public schools play a pivotal role in teaching children about racial equality and tolerance, it is important to staff schools with a racially diverse faculty.

NEA's brief also cited the conclusions of various educational research studies that show:

- Interracial contact is an important tool in combatting stereotypes and prejudice.
- Minority students fare far better academically when the faculty is racially diverse.
- The presence of minority teachers affects the attitudes and sensitivity of white teachers.
- Interactions between whites and minorities diminish racial tensions in school.

All of these factors, the brief concluded, provide a legally sufficient justification for a school's use of affirmative action to maintain faculty diversity, even in the absence of prior discrimination.

The Supreme Court will have to wait for another case to decide whether these educational factors justify affirmative action in schools.

—Michael D. Simpson
NEA Office of General Counsel

Next month's Rights Watch column will take a look at recent court cases outlawing affirmative action for minority student admission to colleges and universities.

Affirmative Action and NEA

Delegates to the 1997 NEA Representative Assembly adopted a policy statement clarifying and reaffirming NEA's strong support for affirmative action.

Together with pertinent resolutions and new business items, the "Policy Statement Regarding the Use of Affirmative Action for Ethnic Minorities and Women in Educational Employment" will shape the Association's political and judicial agendas. Some highlights:

- Affirmative action refers to "any measure, beyond simply terminating and prohibiting discriminatory practices, that may be used to increase or maintain the percentage of employees from an underrepresented class in an employer's workforce, or a particular segment of an employer's workforce."
- NEA supports the use of affirmative action in educational employment to cure the effects of past ethnic or gender discrimination by the particular educational employer involved, and to achieve or maintain diversity in the education employer's workforce.
- NEA supports affirmative action because the effects of discrimination cannot be remedied simply by ending discriminatory employment practices, and because a racially and sexually diverse educational workforce is essential for preparing children to live in a pluralistic society.
- NEA does not support quotas. NEA believes that affirmative action should be used only to make choices among qualified individuals.
- NEA encourages affiliates to support affirmative action but leaves them free to decide for themselves what positions to take.
- The final decision on whether to support affirmative action over seniority should be made by the local affiliate and educational employer through collective bargaining or other form of bilateral decision making.
- The courts are clear: A school district guilty of discrimination can use an affirmative action plan to remedy the situation. But the law is less clear on whether a school district can implement a voluntary affirmative action plan to create or maintain a diverse workforce. Locals in this situation should consult with local or state affiliate counsel.

When you need help working with students, where do you turn?

An after-school staff meeting? (Probably not.)

The unread education book on the nightstand? (Too tired.)

Now you can get help from NEA. We know that most school staff prefer to get ideas from peers—the people who are actually implementing practical strategies in *real* classrooms, buses, and school offices. **helpfrom.nea.org** connects you to these people.

Some education issues—like student standards—are so complex and controversial that rhetoric is obscuring reality. How about concise, research summaries on these hot topics? **helpfrom.nea.org** offers useful, reliable information when you need it.

At **helpfrom.nea.org** you can get practical tips with Works4Me or search the NEA Learning Community for a colleague who's solving a problem you're facing. So take a look. Explore the options. Then let us know what new features you'd like to see on our **helpfrom.nea.org** site, the home of help that's timely and reliable. Help from NEA.

helpfrom.nea.org

Tips and Tools for Better Schools

nea National Education Association

Visit NEA's newest area on the World Wide Web at http://helpfrom.nea.org

Heads Up!

TV Tips

Class of 2000

CBS, January, check local listings. The third installment in this CBS News close-up look at teenagers who will graduate from high school in the year 2000 focuses on friendship. A study guide produced by KIDSNET will be available in early January. For more information, visit the CBS Web site at www.cbs.com.

CBS

The Charlie Horse Music Pizza

PBS, premieres Monday, January 5, check local listings for time. This new series from Shari Lewis introduces young children to the joys of music. A music educators guide, general educators guide, and 20-minute music education video will be available. Contact your local PBS station for details.

PBS

By the Book

Turner Classic Movies, Sundays, January 5-15, 6-8 a.m. ET. TCM's "Novel to Film" series repeats this month, allowing schools to tape and use such classic movies as *Ivanhoe*, *Little Women*, and *The Red Badge of Courage*. A curriculum guide is available for the series. Educators may enroll for free by faxing a request to 770/739-7085.

Feed Your Mind

TBS, Saturdays, beginning January 10, 7-7:30 a.m. ET. The five teen hosts of this show travel all over the world seeking solutions to real-life problems. A learning guide is available. Call 404/885-4315 or visit the Web site at www.tbssuperstation.com/disaster.

A Science Odyssey

PBS, Premieres Saturday, January 11, check local listings for time. From organ transplants to aviation to the theory of relativity, this five-part series chronicles science highlights of the 20th century. An educator's guide is available at www.pbs.org/ aso.

The Andes

The Discovery Channel, Monday, January 12, 8-11 p.m. This miniseries explores the nature, wildlife, and human life that co-exist along the Andes mountain range in South America. For more information about this show and other Discovery Channel programs, go to www.discovery.com.

Long Journey Home: Irish in America

PBS, January 16-18, check local listings for time. This series traces the lives of Irish Americans and chronicles their political success at the local, state, and national level.

Ruby Bridges

ABC, January 18, 7-9 p.m. ET. A look at the true story of 6-year-old Ruby Bridges, one of the first African-American students to integrate public schools. Support materials for this show are available. Call ABC Classroom Connection, 800/647-4ABC.

Endangered Species: Don't Say Goodbye

NBC, January 24, 8-9 p.m. ET. This National Geographic special looks at the world of endangered animals through the eyes of people who have dedicated their lives to saving them.

Skinnmarink TV

The Learning Channel, Mondays-Thursdays, January, 11:30-Noon. The newest addition to "Ready, Set, Learn!" programming, this show uses song and dance to engage preschoolers. Check out the show's Web site at www.skinnmarink.com.

The Learning Channel

Galileo: On the Shoulders of Giants

HBO, January, check local listings for dates, time. The third film in HBO's "Inventor" series, this drama looks at revolutionary astronomer/mathematician Galileo, who challenged the world to view the universe in a new way.

HBO

In the News

CBS, Saturday mornings, between shows. This series of short news reports aimed at children ages seven and up returns to CBS's Saturday morning menu. Produced by CBS News, the show has recently covered trouble aboard the Mir, the IRS, El Niño, and the switch to standard time.

These listings were provided by KIDSNET, a national computerized clearinghouse for children's electronic media. For additional listings and information, check the KIDSNET Web site at www.familyeducation.com/kidsnet.asp.

school stories

Want to know what's really happening inside America's schools? *School Stories*, produced by NEA and The Learning Channel, tackles the tough issues on and off campus and offers lessons of hope. Here's the schedule.

High-Stakes Testing
Sunday, January 4, 9 a.m. ET. Two years ago, only 21 percent of Milwaukee's students passed a math exam required for graduation. Recently, 90 percent of seniors passed the same exam. Here's the story of a community that rallied to help its students.

If Teachers Fail: Fix or Fire?
Sunday, January 11, 9 a.m. ET. Take a look at the Columbus (Ohio) Peer Assistance and Review Program, which puts veteran teachers in charge of helping first-year colleagues and peers in trouble.

Single-Sex Classes
Sunday, January 18, 9 a.m. ET. Single-sex classes have stirred up controversy for years. This episode follows a group of Virginia teachers who are sending students to single-sex and mixed classes to figure out which works best.

Great School by Design
Sunday, January 25, 9 a.m. ET. Over the last five years, an elementary school in Chula Vista, California, has become the top attraction for some 8,000 educators. Why? Staffers have boosted academic achievement by addressing the needs of the diverse student body.

A Sense of Community
Sunday, February 1, 9 a.m. ET. After eight successful years in a poor, rural community, principal Steve Scroggs moved to a "Cadillac" of a school in North Carolina. What he found was a bit surprising. Money and opportunity don't automatically build a sense of community.

BONUS: An added plus for NEA members: Each episode of *School Stories* is available on video after airing. For details or to order tapes, call the NEA Professional Library at 800/229-4200. In addition, educators have permission to tape the shows for future educational use.

Heads Up

Free or Inexpensive

Children and AIDS

Ten of Harold Tuttle's sixth grade students took on the task of creating *A Children's Book About HIV/AIDS*. The 24-page primer includes interviews with doctors, nurses, and a person who is HIV positive. $5 includes s&h. Write to Children's AIDS Awareness Project, Lafayette Regional School, 107 Main St., Franconia, NH 03580.

Nature's Colors

Colors of the Rain Forest, six easy-to-read booklets with colorful photos, take beginning readers on an exploration of the rainforest. Comes with audiocassette and teaching guide. $12.95 includes s&h. Contact Scholastic Inc., 555 Broadway, New York, NY 10012, 800/724-6527.

Preventing Handgun Deaths

One out of every four American homes contains at least one handgun, many of them loaded and unlocked. You can educate parents to the dangers of handgun access with a new brochure from Cease Fire, a national education campaign. Free. Call 202/429-1741.

Fur Flies

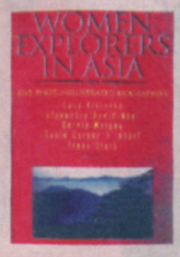
Another title in the *American Issues Debated* series—*Animal Rights*—poses the questions: Should you wear fur? And should animals be released from the zoo? Author Herbert Levine provides arguments on both sides. $19.48 plus $4.67 s&h. Contact Raintree Steck-Vaughn Co., P. O. Box 26015, Austin, TX 78755, 800/531-5015.

Internet Guide

Lost in a sea of Web sites or spending too much time floating around? The *Social Studies Internet Directory*—a collection of more than 100 Web addresses—helps you find your way and offers tips from teachers on incorporating the Internet into your curriculum. $24 plus $3 s&h and $1.74 tax. Write to Web Trek Publishing, 165 Heartwood Ct., Vallejo, CA 94591, 707/557-6482. Send questions via E-mail pvaugha@ix.netcom.com.

Women's History Catalog

The *Women's History Catalog* offers a collection of books, posters, videos, calendars, and other classroom materials about women in various fields, places, and times. Free. Contact the National Women's History Project, 7738 Bell Road, Windsor, CA 95492-8518, 707/838-6000. Send E-mail requests to nwhp@aol.com.



Women In Asia

Women Explorers in Asia describes the lives and travels of five women who explored such places as Tibet, Iran, and the steppes of Russia. $14.25 plus $3.40 s&h. Contact Capstone Press, P.O. Box 669, 151 Good Counsel Dr., Mankato, MN 56001, 800/747-4992.

"Hassle free"

For NEA members, refinancing your mortgage is not just a smart financial decision – it's a piece of cake.

Refinancing could put thousands of dollars in your pocket over the life of your mortgage. And now refinancing can be quick and hassle-free thanks to the NEA Home Financing Program (provided by Norwest Mortgage, Inc.). We offer competitive rates, a free break-even analysis, and a $150 member rebate after closing. New purchase loans and home equity loans are also available. And the program is open to all NEA members, their parents and adult children. Applying couldn't be easier – just pick up your phone! So if you're thinking about refinancing, call the NEA Mortgage QuickLine® today.

1-800-NEA-4-YOU, ext. 727

(1-800-632-4968)

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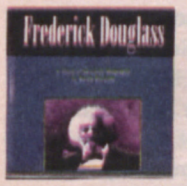
Heads Up



Black History
Frederick Douglass profiles this ex-slave who became a great anti-slavery orator and adviser to President Abraham Lincoln. $10.30 plus $3.40 s&h. Contact Capstone Press, P.O. Box 669, 151 Good Counsel Dr., Mankato, MN 56001, 800/747-4992.

Who Was First?
African Americans Who Were First provides brief biographical sketches of African Americans who were first in their race to accomplish goals in a variety of fields, including medicine, politics, and sports. $15.99 plus $2 s&h. Contact Penguin USA, P.O. Box 999, Dept. 17109, Bergenfield, NJ 07621, 800/253-6476.

Still Dreaming
I Have A Dream presents Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s most famous speech with photo illustrations. $3.99 plus $2.25 s&h. Contact Scholastic Press, P.O. Box 7502, Jefferson City, MO 65102, 800/724-6527.

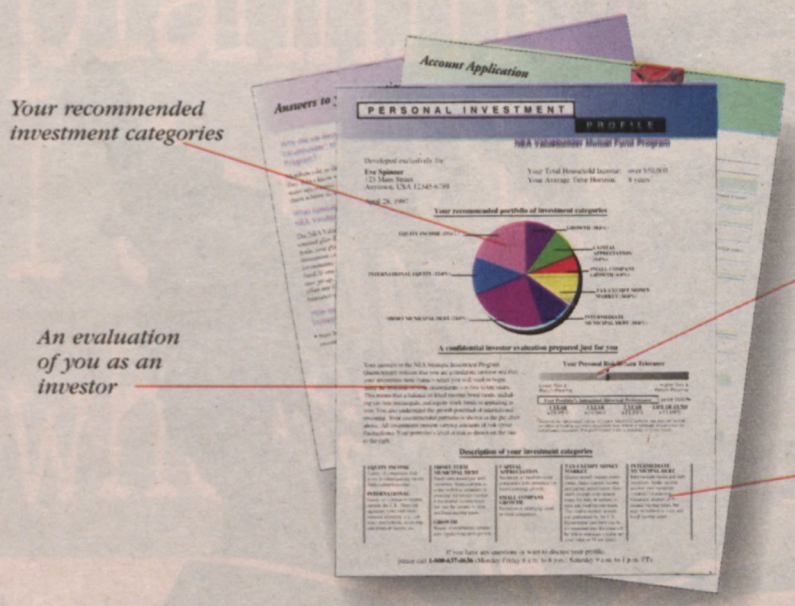
Super Science
Super Science Concoctions offers 75 safe ways to do simple experiments and create science mixtures using easy-to-find supplies and ingredients. $12.95 plus $3 s&h. Contact Williamson Publishing Co., P. O. Box 185, Charlotte, VT 05445, 800/234-8791.

Easy Experiments
Paper Clip Science offers kids in grades 3-6 dozens of ways to make fun science experiments using paper clips and other inexpensive supplies. $4.95 plus $3 s&h. Contact Sterling Publishing Co., 387 Park Ave. South, New York, NY 10016, 800/848-1186. Also from Sterling: *Science Crafts for Kids* ($14.95 plus $3 s&h) and *The Microscope Book* ($9.95 plus $3 s&h).

Can You Drink the Water?
The Water in Your Life EcoWater Educational Program offers free materials that explain some common water problems, such as acid water and hardness, for middle school students. Plus, ways students can get involved to make the water in their communities safer. To order, call 800/869-2837.

Cancer Research
Cancer Research: Because Lives Depend On It—a free kit from the National Cancer Institute—includes easy-to-read fact sheets and other materials about progress in the fight against cancer. Call 800/422-6237 or send E-mail to johnstoj@occ.nci.nih.gov.

Need a plan to help you invest in mutual funds?


Your recommended investment categories
An evaluation of you as an investor
Your comfort level with investment risk
A description of your recommended investment categories
Account Application
PERSONAL INVESTMENT
PROFILE

The NEA Personal Investment Plan

We'll mail it to you. Free.

Exclusively for NEA members and their families–the **NEA Valuebuilder® Mutual Fund Program** gives you everything you need to make your money work for you. Whether you're saving for a home, college tuition or a comfortable retirement, we'll custom-tailor a mutual fund investment plan–complete with recommended investment categories and a wide range of well-known mutual funds.*

All you have to do to get started is answer a brief questionnaire. Your responses will be computer-analyzed**–free of charge–to develop a **Personal Investment Plan** that you can easily put into action. So don't wait. Call today for your free questionnaire. The sooner you get started, the sooner you'll help make your money work for you.

Call toll free, Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. (or Saturday, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.) ET for your free questionnaire.

1 800 637-4636

NEA Valuebuilder® Mutual Fund Program
An exclusive offering of the NEA Strategic Investment Program

*If you open an account, an annual investment advisory fee for the program will apply.
**Software developed in conjunction with Ibbotson Associates, a financial software, data and consulting firm.
Investment advice reflected in the Personal Investment Plan is offered by NEA's MBC Investor Services Company, a Registered Investment Advisor. Related investment advice on the mutual funds available as part of the NEA Valuebuilder Mutual Fund Program is offered through Nationwide Investment Services Corporation, Member NASD/SIPC. For more complete information on the mutual funds available, including prospectuses containing charges and fees, please contact Nationwide Investment Services Corporation at (800) 634-0025. Please read the prospectuses carefully before you invest or send money.

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Heads Up

Grants

Aerospace

The Aerospace Education Foundation offers grants of up to $250 to elementary and secondary classroom teachers to promote aerospace education. Two teachers per school may receive grants in a calendar year, and teachers may receive a grant every other year. Deadline: open. Contact Aerospace Education Foundation, 1501 Lee Hwy., Arlington, VA 22209-1198, 800/727-3337, ext. 4880. On the Web, go to www.aef.org.

Teaching Tolerance

Grants of up to $2,000 are available to K-12 teachers from the Teaching Tolerance project of the Southern Poverty Law Center.

Grants are given for activities that promote acceptance of diversity, peacemaking, and community service. Requests should include a typed, 500-word description of the activity and the proposed budget. Deadline: open.

Contact Teaching Tolerance Grants, 400 Washington Ave., Montgomery, AL 36104. On the Web, go to www.splcenter.org.

Math and Science

The Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation offers $7 million in grants for education projects that boost the entrance of underrepresented groups in the math and science fields. These projects include K-12 demonstration projects, curriculum development, and teacher training. Schools and school districts may apply. Deadline: open.

Contact Cindy Johnson or Clair Payawal, Bristol-Myers Squibb Foundation, 345 Park Ave., New York, NY 10154-0037.

Humanities Grants

Want to strengthen the teaching and learning of history, literature, foreign languages and cultures, and other areas of the humanities? Check into a Humanities Focus Grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Deadline: April 17.

For details, contact the Education Development and Demonstration Division of Research and Education Programs, NEH, 1100 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W., Washington, DC 20506, 202/606-8380. Send E-mail to education@neh.fed.us.

Global Teaching

Best Practices in Education, a not-for-profit organization that aims to bring outstanding teaching practices from other countries to American schools, offers Discovery Grants of up to $2,500 for American K-12 educators. Deadline: open.

Contact Peter Moxhay, President, Best Practices in Education, 92 Exchange St., Portland, ME 04101, fax 207/780-8731. On the Web: www.bestpraceduc.org.

Contests

Student Self-Portraits

NEA's National Foundation for the Improvement of Education (NFIE) is seeking young Americans' self-portraits. Winning pictures will be featured in a poster exhibition at NEA's Representative Assembly in New Orleans next July. The exhibition will have a permanent home at NEA

READ ACROSS AMERICA
Make March 2nd
America's
Read to Kids Day
Celebrate Dr. Seuss' Birthday — Read with a Child
nea
NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION
1-888-747-READ
www.nea.org/readacross
The Cat In The Hat™ & © Dr. Seuss Enterprises, L.P. 1957, 1997 All Rights Reserved.

Heads Up

headquarters. Deadline: March 8. For an application and copy of contest rules, write NFIE, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036. On the Web, go to www.nfie.org.

Community Web Sites

Involve your students in developing or expanding your town's Web site, and you might win an Apple Power Macintosh computer and a Cisco Micro Web server for your school. Second prize: an Apple Power Mac and Microsoft software. Deadline: April 1.

Contact the Computer Learning Foundation, P.O. Box 60005, Palo Alto, CA 94306, 605/327-3347. On the Web: www.computerlearning.org.

Fellowships

For Teachers Who Write

The education reform journal *Rethinking Schools* is holding a one-week summer institute, "Power of the Pen: Teachers as Writers," this summer from July 12 to 17 in Milwaukee.

The seminar is designed for teachers who want to critically examine and write about classroom practice and policy issues.

Participants' transportation and lodging costs will be covered. Participants are also expected to commit to a follow-up, one-week institute in the summer of 1999.

Deadline: February 15. Contact *Rethinking Schools*, 1001 E. Keefe Ave., Milwaukee, WI 53212, 800/669-4192. Fax: 414/964-7220. Send E-mail to rsbusiness@aol.com. On the Web, go to www.rethinkingschools.org.

Humanities

The Council for Basic Education will offer fellowships to 17 educational teams to conduct four weeks of summer study in the humanities. Each team will include four K-12 teachers and a scholar they choose. Teachers will receive $1,400 each. Scholars will get $1,500. Deadline: February 2.

For details, contact the Humanities Scholars Program, Council for Basic Education, 1319 F St., N.W., Suite 900, Washington, DC 20004, Fax 202/347-5047. Send E-mail requests to info@c-b-e.org. On the Web, go to www.c-b-e.org.

Opportunities

Make a Quilt

In celebration of the approaching turn of the century, the American Craft Museum in New York City is sponsoring Quilts Across America, a national quilt project.

The museum invites fifth grade teachers and their classes to create quilt blocks highlighting American life. For a free participation packet, contact Andrea Guttman, Education Department, American Craft Museum, 40 West 53rd St., New York, NY 10019, Fax 212/459-0926.

Black History Month

The Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History (ASALH) is offering a comprehensive educational resource kit of 50 essays by famous African Americans, posters, games, and other learning tools to help you plan your own classroom observance. Cost of the complete package is $75. Contact ASALH, 1407 14th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20005, 202/667-2822, Fax 202/387-9802.

It's easier than you'd think with the help of a professional.

Ed Fissinger, NEA VIP

Don't put off your retirement planning because you're not sure where to begin. Instead, get the help you need to get started from an NEA Valuebuilder Investment Professional (VIP). Together with your VIP you can plan the kind of retirement you're working so hard to achieve.

To find out more about the NEA Valuebuilder® Annuity Program, call today for your special **no-obligation consultation** with an NEA VIP, like Ed Fissinger. He can help you start planning for a comfortable, enjoyable retirement.

NEA VIPs, like Ed, are retirement planning specialists who can help you better understand your retirement needs, answer your questions, and assist you in choosing the most appropriate investment options. Of course, if you wish to make changes to your annuity investment options at any time, your NEA VIP is always there to help you.

Call now. Let your NEA VIP help you develop the retirement plan that's right for you.

Call today for your no-obligation consultation and we'll send you your FREE NEA Valuebuilder® Retirement Planning Kit.

1-800-637-4636

Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. (or Saturday, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.) ET

For members residing in Texas, please call 1-800-451-0070.

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The Internal Revenue Code prohibits certain distributions attributable to salary reduction contributions before an individual reaches 59½, separates from service, dies or becomes disabled, or experiences a financial hardship as defined by the Code. A 10% penalty tax may apply for withdrawals prior to age 59 ½.

VBNT0198

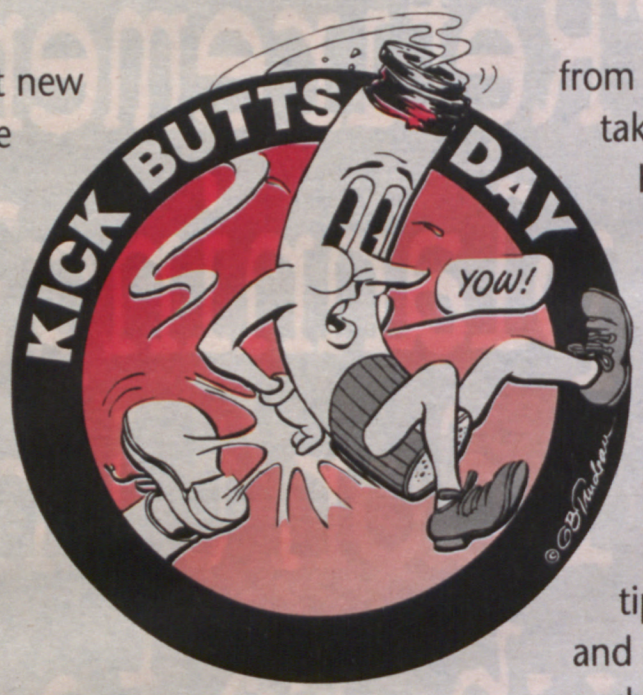
Kick Butts Day: Fight Back Against Big Tobacco

April 2, 1998

Here's an opportunity for you and your students to join with the NEA Health Information Network and the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids to demand a healthy future for America's children.

Tobacco companies addict new customers every day to replace those who quit or die from tobacco use, and they're targeting our kids. It's working: 3,000 children become regular smokers each day; tobacco will eventually kill one-third of them.

But now you have a chance to fight back for and with America's kids.



On April 2, 1998, teachers, parents, and community leaders, all working with kids from across the country, will join to take a stand against Big Tobacco. Kick Butts Day is a nationwide celebration encouraging youth to become leaders and advocates against the tobacco industry.

Get involved. Order your free Kick Butts Day activity guide. It's filled with ideas and tips you'll need to plan, organize, and publicize a successful event in your school or community. Together, we can win the fight for America's kids.

Mail your completed form to:
Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids
1707 L Street NW, Suite 800
Washington, D.C. 20036
Attn: Kick Butts Day '98 Information Kit

Or FAX it to:
Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids
Attn: Kick Butts Day '98 Information Kit, 202-296-5427

Or Access and send this form through our web site
www.kickbuttsday.org

Materials will be available by January 1998. For more information, E-mail kickbuttsday@tobaccofreekids.org

NEA HIN & CAMPAIGN for TOBACCO-FREE Kids

NEA HIN & Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids
Kick Butts Day '98
Activity Guide Request Form

Name: _____
Ms./Mr./Mrs. First MI Last

Organization/School: _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Fax: _____

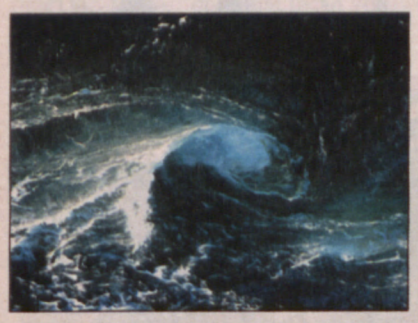
E-Mail: _____ Number of Guides Requested (limit of 3, please): _____

Heads Up

Web Winners

Free Internet Service

A free Internet push service designed for educators is being offered by Davidson & Associates, an education software firm. Educast enables teachers to select special interests, such as lesson plans or news stories that relate to teaching, and have the information delivered to their computers. Educators can download Educast at www.educast.com.



Year of the Ocean

1998 is the Year of the Ocean, and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) is marking the occasion with special classroom materials for teachers.

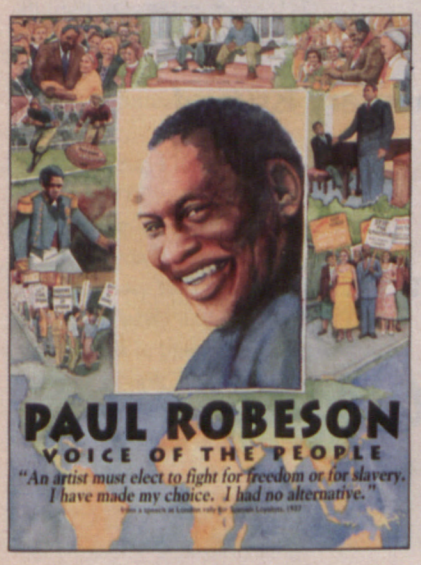
Contact the NOAA Outreach Unit, 1305 East West Hwy., Silver Spring, MD 20910. Year of the Ocean information can be accessed after January 1 at www.noaa.gov/yoto98.

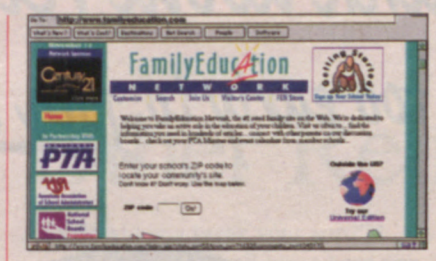
Be sure to look at the NOAA Library site for a broad range of oceanic and atmospheric information on the Internet at www.lib. noaa.gov/docs/windandsea.html.

Robeson Remembered

This year marks the 100th birthday of Paul Robeson, author, artist, lawyer, and civil rights leader. You can mark the occasion by tapping into lesson plans and curriculum guides, plus a list of Robeson films, books, tapes, and posters.

For details, call 312/344-7114 or check the Robeson Web site at www.cs.uchicago.edu/cpsr/robeson/.


PAUL ROBESON
VOICE OF THE PEOPLE
"An artist must elect to fight for freedom or for slavery. I have made my choice. I had no alternative."



School/Community Sites

FamilyEducation Network has expanded its Web site to include community sites linking parents with schools. In all, 16,409 community-based Web sites, one for every school district in the country, will help parents access everything from lunch menus to teacher contacts. Check it out at www.familyeducation.com.

Teaching Shakespeare

Everything you always wanted to know about William Shakespeare and the Globe Theatre is now available on a new site from the Encyclopedia Brittanica.

You'll find a chronology of the Shakespearean world, maps and video clips, plus links to other Shakespeare sites at http://Shakespeare.eb.com.

Physics

This site teaches many basic concepts in physics through interactive applications and colorful graphics. You can also chat with a physicist. Check it out at www.colorado.edu/physics/2000.

Weather

The Weather Underground, not to be confused with the '60s revolutionary organization, is a site designed to help students in K-12 classrooms learn about the weather. Take a look at www.wunderground.com.

Children's Literature

Random House has launched a Web site tailor-made for teachers. The site features a resource center with author bios, teacher guides and resource materials, a teachers "lounge" featuring chats by grade level, and a monthly tip section. The publishing house will soon include a database of author appearances and contests for teachers and students. Go to www.teachersatrandom.com/.

Renaissance Redux

Go back in time to the Renaissance with this virtual site. You can visit the Tower of London, the Sistine Chapel, or pop in on a school or local tavern. Go to http://tqd.advanced.org/3588/Renaissance.

Awards

Time Warner Winners

Each year, Time Warner Cable names winners of its National Teacher Awards for creative use of cable programming and new technology to improve student learning.

Earlier this year, 15 projects were judged winners, covering every grade level and a wide range of topics and activities. Creators of winning projects each received $1,000, a certificate, and an engraved "Crystal Apple."

These NEA members won awards:

- Charlie LaFauci, East Somerville Community School, Somerville, Massachusetts.
- Chris Gardner, Hawthorne Elementary, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.
- Bianca Curtis and Karen Stofcheck, Lecanto Primary School, Lecanto, Florida.
- Ann Buechel and Carlos Kreibich, Elkhart Lake-Glenbeulah Middle School, Elkhart Lake, Wisconsin.
- Jennifer Dean, Lake Shipp Elementary, Winter Haven, Florida.
- Patricia Solfest, Kim Wardean, Scott Hayden, Tom Schofield, Sarah Pszeniczny, and Jan Oestreich, Altoona Middle School, Altoona, Wisconsin.
- Jane Borden, Kimberly Abler, Mary Jakubiak, Mary Widen, Tippecanoe School for the Humanities, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Chevron Awards

The Chevron Education Awards recognize junior and senior high school teachers who have developed outstanding lesson plans for teaching math and science.

Six first-place winners recently received $5,000 each, and each of their schools was awarded $1,000. The six second- place winners received $2,500 apiece. Seven of the 12 finalists are NEA members. They are:

- Susan Mercer, Spurgeon Intermediate, Santa Ana, California.
- Karen Seddon, Neptune Middle School, Kissimmee, Florida.
- Luis Nadelson, Capital High School, Olympia, Washington.
- Gracelynn Johnson, Camden High School, Camden, New Jersey.
- Elissa Elliott, Mayo High School, Rochester, Minnesota.
- Catherine McCluskey, East Wake High School with the North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics, Wendell, North Carolina.
- Barry Shapiro, North Hollywood High School, Animal Studies/Biological Sciences, Zoo Magnet Center, North Hollywood, California.

Coming Soon

Robot Zoo

Coming to science and technology museums and zoos near you this year: two Robot Zoo exhibits that feature eight-foot giant robot animals and dozens of hand-on activities for children.

The exhibits, sponsored by *Time* magazine and Silicon Graphics, made their first stops in Philadelphia and San Jose earlier this year. Their goal: to help kids understand real-life characteristics of animals, such as how a chameleon changes colors, a fly walks on the ceiling, and a giant squid propels itself.

For details, visit the Robot Zoo Web site at www.sgi.com/robotzoo.

Achievements

Alaskan Heads the ALA

Alaska NEA member Ann Symons, a librarian at Juneau-Douglas High School, was recently elected president of the American Library Association, the world's oldest and largest library organization. Symons will serve a one-year term.

It's never too early to think about retirement — and never too early to join NEA-Retired.

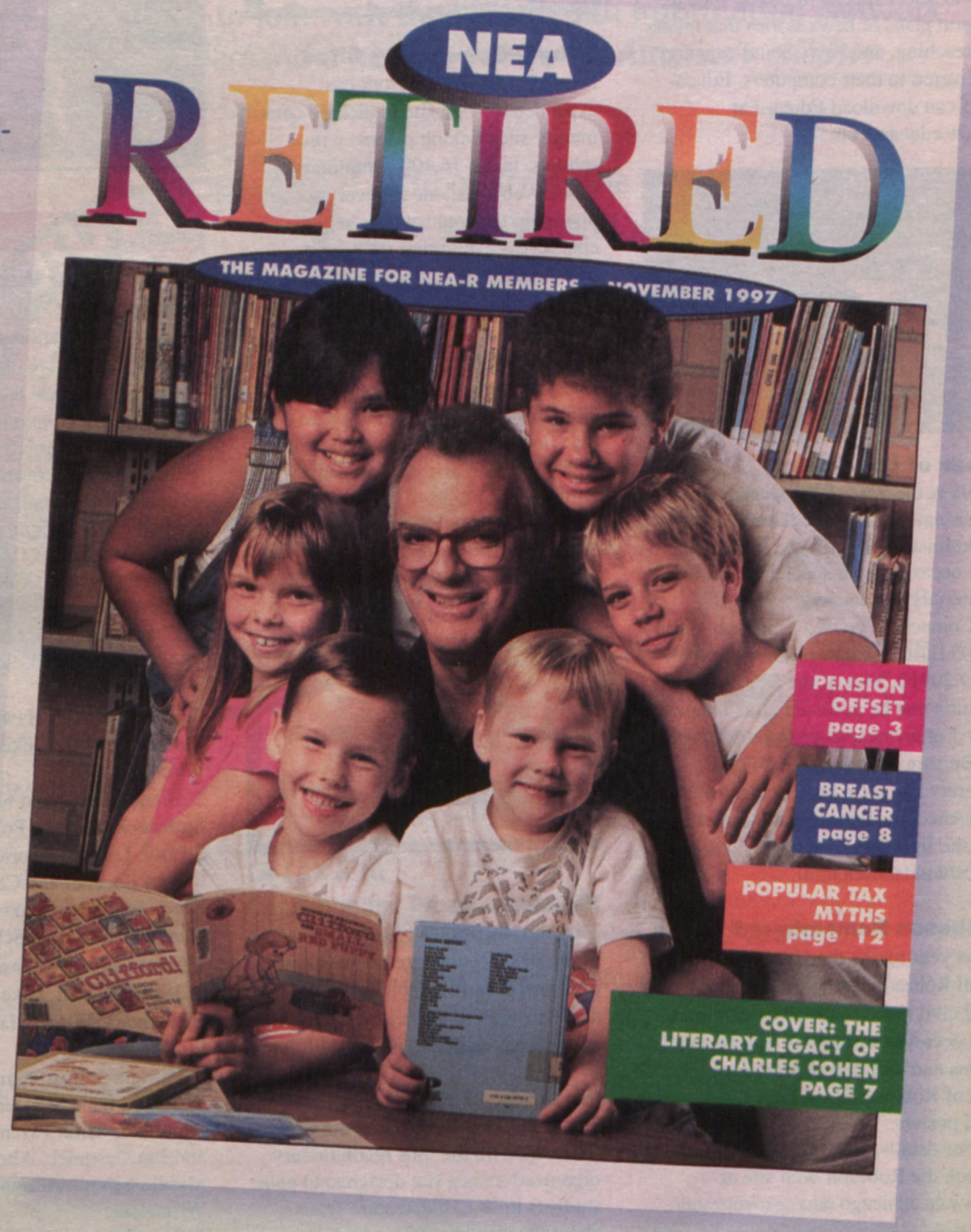
You don't have to be retired to join NEA-Retired, the only retired educators organization affiliated with NEA. You just have to be interested in making the most of your retired years.

As a pre-retired member of NEA-Retired, you get much more than a membership card.

You get *NEA Retired* magazine, published six times a year and full of news and tips on everything from pensions to travel.

You get access to special discounts and materials that address the key financial decisions you'll need to make as retirement nears.

You get connected to a network of caring individuals, retired and about to retire, who are deeply committed to mentoring new teachers — and helping all children succeed.



Want to see for yourself what NEA-Retired is all about? For a complimentary issue of *NEA Retired* magazine, just call

1-800-637-4636

Monday-Friday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. (or Saturday, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.) ET
Check us on the Web:www.nea.org/retired.

NEA-Retired, a Resource for Public Education

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NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

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In the Light Lane

Olive, the Other Reindeer

One day, my fifth graders were to have physical education the first period after announcements. As my students filed in, one of the girls came up to me and said, "Mr. Bodlak, I have constipation."

"Oh," I said, "does that mean you can't go to p.e.?"

She looked at me and said, "No, that means I can't go to the bathroom."

Tom Bodlak
Des Plaines, Illinois

During a math lesson, I asked my sixth grade class to define an exponent. One of the better math students raised her hand and said, "It's a ponent you used to have"—a reflection of our society, perhaps.

Alyce Bell
Madera, California

Here in Berks County, we're proud of our farm families and their contributions to our society. We select a "Dairy Princess"—a high school girl—to visit our classes and educate us about dairy production and farm life.

Needless to say, my kindergartners were excited at the prospect of seeing a real princess in person.

When she arrived and was introduced, one of my students took a look at her chaperone and blurted out, "That must be the Dairy Queen!"

Patsy Sabold
Wyomissing Hills, Pennsylvania

This year, I had to start without some of my materials due to the UPS strike. Then one day, the teacher's math manual arrived.

I excitedly told my students that I had good news and bad news. "The good news is that I have received the teacher's book," I began. "And the bad news is that . . ."

"There's math in it," sighed one of my students.

Gina Seidl
Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin

"Did you break your arm?" I asked a small boy whose arm was in a cast.

"No," he replied, "just the bone."

Virla Jean Lynk
Saginaw, Michigan

Just before the holiday break, I gave a chapter exam. Feeling in the giving mood of the season, I included some easy bonus point questions. I asked one class, "How many reindeer did Santa Claus have?"

To my surprise, one girl wrote the answer, "10."

I knew the original eight and would give credit for adding Rudolph. But I had to ask her who the 10th reindeer was.

"Olive," she answered.

I replied that I'd never heard of that one.

"Sure," she said, "*Olive* the other reindeer."

Debbie Petrun
Point Marion, Pennsylvania

As a Title I teacher, I frequently go into other classrooms and team teach. One hectic day, I rushed into a first grade classroom to teach a test preparation session. I realized that the teacher had moved everything around.

The classroom teacher was getting ready to step out of the room, so I called out, "Mrs. Hopkins, where's the overhead?"

Before she could answer, six-year-old Ernie looked at me pitifully and solemnly pointed toward the ceiling.

Marsha Bishop
Fayette County, West Virginia

I'll admit to being "Mrs. Malaprop" at times. In my exuberance to share knowledge and stories, I sometimes talk too fast and switch gears faster than even my MTV-bred students can absorb.

But imagine my surprise when I "learned," from a student's paper in my Latino studies class, that the Maya pierced their "gentiles."

And after an introductory lesson on immigration followed by the study of India, one student defined "melting pot" as "the place where Hindus cremate their dead."

Twenty-five years into my career, there's never a dull moment for me.

Annette Chandler
Thornton, Colorado

It was the first week of school for our kindergartners, and my fellow teacher and I were conducting our school tour for the little ones.

Upon arriving at the school library, one child immediately spied the large model skeleton and pointed it out to the others.

The librarian, seizing upon this important educational moment, asked, "Does anyone know what we call a person like this who's all bones?"

"Very hungry!" piped up one of our eager kindergartners.

Becky Helding
Decatur, Illinois

Need more laughs? Check out Plants, Animals, and Humid Beans, *a book based on "In the Light Lane." $6.95 for NEA members from the NEA Professional Library. Stock #1880-X-00-F. To order, call 800/229-4200.*

A Funny Age

Every once in a while I'm reminded of the generation gap between me and my students.

One year, my sixth graders wouldn't stop asking me how old I was. Finally, I told them, "I was born the year after Pearl Harbor."

With a very puzzled look on his face, one boy raised his hand and asked, "Who's she?"

Carol Savona
Kenilworth, New Jersey

As I was teaching my sixth grade art class about the artist Frida Kahlo, I mentioned that she was born in 1907 and died in 1954, at the age of 47.

I was going on to recount some of the interesting things that happened in her life when a student shot his hand in the air and asked, "Did Frida Kahlo die of old age?"

Charlene Armstrong
Galesburg, Illinois

I once asked one of my second graders to put my lunch in the art room "icebox." I should have used the proper word—refrigerator.

For when I went to retrieve my lunch . . . it was in the freezer, frozen solid!

Barbara Granite
Rochester, New York

One of my funniest moments occurred when a student in my eighth grade chess club asked me how old I was.

"I'm 55," I replied

He looked at my face and said, "Oh my! I didn't know you were old."

Carol Ann Harlos
Buffalo, New York

Got Laughs?

Have a funny school story, anecdote, or vignette you'd like to share with other NEA members? You can send contributions to "In the Light Lane," *NEA Today*, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036, fax 202/822-7206, E-mail NEAToday@nea.org.

Or you can post your contribution—and read more stories—on *NEA Today*'s Web site. Just point your Web browser to **www.nea.org/neatoday** and click on "In the Light Lane."

People

Help's Around the Corner

Jay Hare

Many new teachers face situations that make them want to run for their mother. For Alabama teacher **Allyson Goodman**, that's meant just a short jaunt down the hall.

When Goodman walked into her first kindergarten class at Grandview Elementary in Dothan, she brought with her the experience gained from college courses and internships. But as 16 kindergartners stared at her, Goodman quickly realized she was breaking new ground.

She plowed ahead. But she also felt fortunate that her mother, **Carol Goodman** (pictured on left), teaches first grade around the corner.

"I know I can go to her with my questions anytime," Allyson says of her mother, a 17-year veteran. "She is mother and mentor."

Allyson, now in her second year of teaching, praises her colleagues at Grandview. But she admits that she feels more "comfortable talking to mom."

Their collaboration produced a quality educator—last year Allyson received a Sallie Mae award for best new teacher in her district.

"I believe every child can learn," she says as she faces this year's class of 18 kindergartners. "Because of this belief, I can take the children as far as they can go."

Diverse Celebration

Two years ago, **Sheila Shafer** "wanted to end students' feeling that they were invisible." So Shafer, a teacher at Corvallis (Oregon) High School, started a multicultural club to celebrate the school's diversity and let all students know they were welcome.

"We want our club to do more than just address problems," says Shafer. "We want to be proactive."

The club has attracted a large following, as members talk about ways minority students have been made to feel uncomfortable or invisible.

"And we take a public stand about how our school will not tolerate any racist or biased behavior," Shafer adds.

Sensitivity and respect are key values she carries over from her club into her classroom. Kids who feel marginalized, Shafer notes, are at increased risk of dropping out, because they don't feel invested in their school.

"We need to create a community of young people who feel good about themselves and feel pride about who they are," says Shafer, who was honored recently by the local NAACP for her work.

"For every dissimilarity that exists between cultures," she notes, "there are a lot of similarities."

Jeremy Harrison

David Zalubowski

Shepherd New Readers

Book fairs, reading programs, children—**Shirley Lamb Sternola** loved them all so much that, after 33 years as an educator, she couldn't bear to part with them. So when Sternola retired, she opened her own children's bookstore.

Bo-Peep Books in Lakewood, Colorado, boasts pint-size furniture for budding readers to lounge on and parenting books for the adults who've tagged along.

You'd expect the book selection to be top-notch, given that Sternola became an elementary school library media specialist in 1973, after teaching fifth and sixth grade in Colorado's Jefferson County.

Plus Sternola's office manager is Candy Ferguson, her library aide before she retired.

And the rest of the staff?

"Retired and current teachers and media specialists, every one of them," says Sternola.

Urging bookstores to hire retired educators is a personal mission of Sternola's. She even addressed the topic at a meeting of the American Booksellers for Children Association.

"Hiring educators gives us a huge head start in terms of knowledge of books and rapport with kids," Sternola notes. "And the parents are pleased to see the strong educational focus of our staff and our store."

Battling Tough Strains

Paraprofessional **David Hockaday** is crusading to protect the health and safety of the 600 members of the Lansing (Michigan) Educational Assistants.

Many of these NEA members work with special needs students. So first Hockaday campaigned for more than two years to secure medical supplies, such as gloves and smocks, to protect school employees from bodily fluids that could spread HIV and hepatitis.

But without workshops on preventative measures and procedures, Hockaday stresses, these supplies wouldn't have much of an impact.

"Recently, I received a call from a special ed assistant who was required to do suctioning, but didn't know how," says Hockaday, the local Association president. "Our members are concerned about how to deal with HIV strains A through E."

Now, thanks to a grant from the NEA Health Information Network, the local and school district are working to train all education staffers.

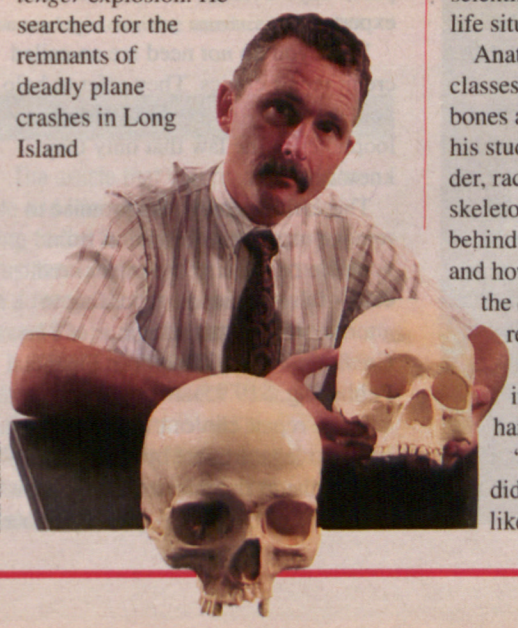
"We would like to see training not just for nurses and educational assistants," says Hockaday (pictured here reviewing medical supplies with paraprofessional Carol Pollock), "but also for the school secretaries who often have to deal with emergencies."

Robert Chase

Pass Him a Tissue

"I tell my kids, 'If you get into the medical fields, you get your hands dirty,'" says Maryland science teacher **Robert McDowell**.

As a forensic investigator, McDowell dug through the wreckage after the Oklahoma City bombing. He dove for the remains of the *Challenger* explosion. He searched for the remnants of deadly plane crashes in Long Island Sound, the Florida Everglades, and the Potomac River. After the Midwest floods uprooted century-old graves in 1996, he helped identify the bodies.



Scott Suchman

And McDowell has brought his experiences home to his science classes at Einstein High School in Kensington, showing students how scientific knowledge can apply to real life situations.

Anatomy lessons in McDowell's classes don't cover just the names of bones and tissues. McDowell shows his students how to identify the gender, race, and age of a decomposed skeleton. He teaches the science behind death—how the body works, and how scientists can figure out the details from 100-year-old remains.

McDowell believes in educating his students' eyes—and their hands too.

"Would you go to an M.D. who didn't know what tissues felt like?" he asks.

Money

Decisions, Decisions

Coming to Terms

If you have a bad credit rating, you'll need to make some informed decisions as you tighten your belt and get your finances back on track.

Here are places to contact, options to consider, and hazards to beware of:

- **Credit bureaus** keep credit records on everyone who has ever requested credit. If your credit is impaired, you should get a copy of your credit report from one of the three major bureaus. They are Equifax (800/685-1111), Experian (800/682-7654), and Trans Union (316/636-6100).

- **Credit counseling** can help you sort through your credit problems and get your spending back on track.

The Consumer Credit Counseling Service offers low-cost, confidential help for people who have trouble managing their bills. To find the office nearest you, call 800/388-2227. Debtors Anonymous also offers local support groups. Write to Debtors Anonymous, General Service Board, P.O. Box 400, Grand Central Station, New York, NY 10163.

- **Debit cards** look just like a credit card, but the money comes directly out of your bank account. A debit card can be a good tool to help establish discipline and get bills under control because it forces you to pay as you go.

- A **secured credit card** is a credit card backed by a bank deposit. These cards can be an effective way to rebuild bad credit.

You deposit money in a bank, and the bank issues you a credit card. The credit limit is usually the same as your deposit. If you use and pay off your secured card on time, you can often move up to a regular credit card, perhaps after one year.

- Experts warn that **credit repair clinics** are almost always a rip-off—at best.

Though they may promise to clean up your credit record, these clinics can't do anything that you can't do on your own. And sometimes the clinics make recommendations that actually involve skirting the law, like taking on a new identity.

Good Credit Gone Bad?

Forget credit repair clinics. You already have the tools to get out of the red and fix your credit rating.

Credit is a necessity for the good life—or any kind of life—in America today. Just ask NEA member Eula Burnett, who teaches emotionally disturbed children in Sheperdsville, Kentucky.

For the past 14 years, Burnett has been paying college expenses for up to four family members each year.

"If we hadn't had our credit cards, we wouldn't have made it," she says. "Frequently there's some kind of household emergency and we have to take out a loan."

Besides teaching, Burnett works 20 hours a week at a clothing store. Her husband, Robert, holds down a good job at General Electric. Yet their income hasn't always covered the costs of Burnett's doctorate courses and helping out their three sons who are in graduate school and law school.

Still, the Burnetts have worked hard not to impair their credit rating.

"We have a lot of outstanding debt at this time," Burnett says. "But we're very careful to keep current on our payments."

Some families, like the Burnetts, manage to stay on top of their debt even when they're stretched. Others fall behind—sometimes due to illness, a job loss, or a divorce—and may mar their credit ratings. That calls for action.

"First you need to understand how credit works, and then you need a plan," says Gerri Detweiler, a credit expert.

What you do *not* need are so-called credit repair clinics. They offer to help you clean up your credit by using loopholes in the law that only they know about.

These clinics may also promise to remove negative information from your file or to get you a major credit card—false promises, according to attorney John Ventura, author of *The Credit Repair Kit* (Dearborn Financial Publishing, $19.95).

Some repair clinics may even get you into legal trouble by encouraging you to distort the information in your credit file or by helping you to initiate a new file with a new address and federal identification number.

Paul Schumann

Kentucky teacher Eula Burnett gets a lot of credit for juggling a tough financial load—including college expenses for four—and keeping her credit rating intact.

"There are no special tricks that these credit repair clinics know," says Ruth Susswein, executive director of Bankcard Holders of America. "You can clean up your credit report yourself."

Here are five steps to credit repair:

Lock your cards away.
Don't close your accounts yet. If your credit rating has been damaged, you may have trouble getting new cards. But stop using them. Your immediate goal is to repair your credit rating and to get out of debt.

Figure out where you stand.
It's painful to focus on budgets and net worth statements if you suspect that you make less than you spend and that your net worth is in minus territory. Still, it's a necessary first step.

Devise a plan.
If you are to clear up your credit rating, you must begin paying your bills on time. That means you pay at least the minimum balance on each bill within 30 days. Determine whether you can do that. If you aren't even close, consider credit counseling.

Negotiate with creditors.
Nine out of ten creditors will renegotiate terms with you if you are having trouble paying bills, Detweiler says.

Add pertinent information to your credit file.
Your credit report may be damaged as much by the information that's omitted from it as by the negative information that's found there.

Creditors are not required to report information to a credit bureau. But *you* are entitled to add information that you feel will help your credit rating.

—Mary Rowland

Resources

No matter how well we plan, situations arise when we need added credit. For times like these, NEA Member Benefits created the convenient, affordable NEA Line of Credit, exclusively for NEA members.

With a credit line between $500 and $25,000, the NEA Line of Credit has no annual fee, no check transaction fees, and no collateral requirement. With a low annual percentage rate, this Line of Credit costs you nothing until you use it.

Once approved for the NEA Line of Credit, you'll receive a book of checks to use anytime, anywhere. These checks look like personal checks, so no one will know you're using credit.

Call NEA Member Benefits today at 800/637-4636 for more on the NEA Line of Credit and other NEA Financial Services programs.

Eye on Retirement

The Benefits at Turning 65

If you're like most pre-retirees, Social Security springs to mind as you contemplate your retirement.

How can you maximize your benefit?

■ The first step is to understand how Social Security works.

To qualify for Social Security, you need to have worked for 10 years. When you work and pay FICA (Federal Insurance Contribution Act) taxes, you earn Social Security credits. Most people earn four a year. People born after 1929 need 40 credits to be eligible.

Your Social Security benefits are based on earnings averaged over your 35 highest-earning years. If you have more than 35 years, low years are discarded. If you have fewer than 35 years, zero-earning years are averaged in.

Then a complicated formula determines where on the benefits spectrum you'll land.

■ One of the biggest decisions you'll make regarding Social Security is when to retire and start drawing benefits. The longer you wait, the bigger the benefit.

If you retire at age 62, your monthly benefit will be reduced by about 20 percent. If you wait until age 63, your check will be cut by 13 percent. At 64, the reduction is 6.5 percent.

You receive full retirement benefits when you retire at the "normal retirement age," as determined by the Social Security Administration (SSA) depending on when you were born (see table).

For each month past normal retirement age that you delay receiving benefits, you receive special credits that raise the amount of the benefit you'll receive once you retire. You can continue accruing credits until you reach age 70.

■ Review your Social Security record every three years. Correct any errors as soon as possible. You'll have to provide proof that a mistake was made—evidence of your earnings (a W-2 form) for the period in dispute.

To receive a report outlining your work history and how much you can expect from Social Security if you retire at ages 62, 65, and 70, call Social Security at 800/772-1213 and request a Personal Earnings and Benefit Estimate Statement (PEBES), otherwise known as Form SSA 7004.

The form also can be downloaded from the SSA's Web site (www.ssa.gov).

■ If you decide to continue working after you retire, it may make sense to wait to collect your benefits.

That's because if you're under age 65 and earn more than $8,640, Social Security will cut your benefits by $1 for every $2 you earn over the limit. If you're between 65 and 69 and earn more than $13,500, the cut is $1 for every $3 over the limit. The earnings limit doesn't apply to those age 70 or older.

Worksheet

When Will You Be Eligible for Social Security?

To determine the year you'll be eligible for full Social Security benefits, do the following calculation, using the table below:

		Year	Month
1. From the table, based on your year of birth, indicate the age at which you'll qualify.			
2. Subtract your current age.	−		
3. Answer is number of years until retirement.	=		
4. Now, add the current year (i.e.,1997) to the number of years until retirement.	+		
5. The total of the last two gives you the year you'll qualify for full benefits.	=		

Year of Birth	Normal Retirement Age*	Year of Birth	Normal Retirement Age*
1937 or earlier	65	1955	66 and 2 months
1938	65 and 2 months	1956	66 and 4 months
1939	65 and 4 months	1957	66 and 6 months
1940	65 and 6 months	1958	66 and 8 months
1941	65 and 8 months	1959	66 and 10 months
1942	65 and 10 months	1960 and later	67
1943-1954	66		

* Normal retirement age is the earliest age at which you can begin receiving unreduced retirement benefits.

Educated Investor

Q: I read in the "Personal Finance" column in my state Association newspaper that the money in a revocable trust is dumped back into your estate for purposes of calculating estate taxes. Is that true of the first $600,000 in assets as well?

A. No. Each person is permitted to pass on $600,000 in assets either during his or her lifetime or at death without paying estate taxes. That amount is scheduled to increase to $1 million by 2006 under provisions of the Taxpayer Relief Act of 1997.

People who use revocable trusts can make the same use of this exclusion as anyone else. Each taxpayer is also permitted to give away $10,000 each year to as many persons as he or she likes without eating into the lifetime exclusion.

The article that you read on revocable and irrevocable trusts was referring to the fact that many taxpayers mistakenly believe that *all* the money in a revocable trust avoids estate taxes. That's not the case.

—NEA Member Benefits

Note: "Personal Finance" is a syndicated column distributed by NEA Member Benefits that appears in many NEA state and local affiliate publications.

Financial Finds

Credit Repair Primers

The Credit Repair Kit by John Ventura (Dearborn Financial Publishing, $19.95) includes coverage of your rights under the Fair Credit Reporting Act and how-tos on writing letters to help clear your record. *The Ultimate Credit Handbook* by Gerri Detweiler (Plume/Penguin, $12.95), former executive director of Bankcard Holders of America, offers further advice on reclaiming a good credit rating.

Money Advice on the Web

If you've wondered why some people have no trouble putting money aside while others can't save a dime, check out Microsoft's Money Insider on the Web at www.moneyinsider.com. It includes an article by *NEA Today* contributor Mary Rowland on credit, plus information on saving and investing, taxes, and home ownership.

Credit Report Monitor

If your credit picture is complicated, consider signing up with a company that helps you monitor your credit report. CreditComm Services (800/777-9700) charges $29.95 for a credit profile that's based on reports from all three major credit bureaus (Experian, Equifax, and Trans Union). For $49.95 a year, the company will send you a credit profile, notify you if a creditor adds negative information to your file, and alert you when someone requests your credit report from any of the three bureaus. CreditComm's new service, CreditClear, will analyze your credit history for $19.95 and let you know if you're likely to be approved for a mortgage, car loan, or credit card before you actually apply.

Credit Solicitations

Every time you get a preapproved credit card offer in the mail, a corresponding "inquiry" has been made into your credit report at one of the three major credit bureaus. Until now, there was very little you could do about it. But under a new law, credit bureaus are required to set up a toll-free number that consumers can call to "opt out" of preapproved offers. The toll-free numbers for the three major credit bureaus are: Equifax, 800/556-4711; Experian, 800/353-0809; Trans Union, 800-680/7293. A phone call will close your credit file to prescreening for two years.

"(The National Board's) standards are the best tools we have for rejuvenating the soul of the profession."

— from What Matters Most, a report of the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future

Learn more about National Board certification.

Read the standards for your teaching field.

CERTIFICATE	STUDENT AGE
Early Childhood/Generalist	3-8
Middle Childhood/Generalist	7-12
Early Adolescence/Generalist	11-15
Early Adolescence/English Language Arts	11-15
Early Adolescence/Science	11-15
Early Adolescence and Young Adulthood/Art	11-18
Adolescence & Young Adulthood/English Language Arts	14-18
Adolescence and Young Adulthood/Mathematics	14-18
Adolescence and Young Adulthood/Science	14-18
Middle Childhood/English Language Arts	7-12
Middle Childhood and Early Adolescence/Mathematics	7-12
Middle Childhood/Science	7-12
Social Studies-History	7-18+
English as a New Language	7-18+
Exceptional Needs/Generalist	3-18+
Vocational Education	11-18+

Call

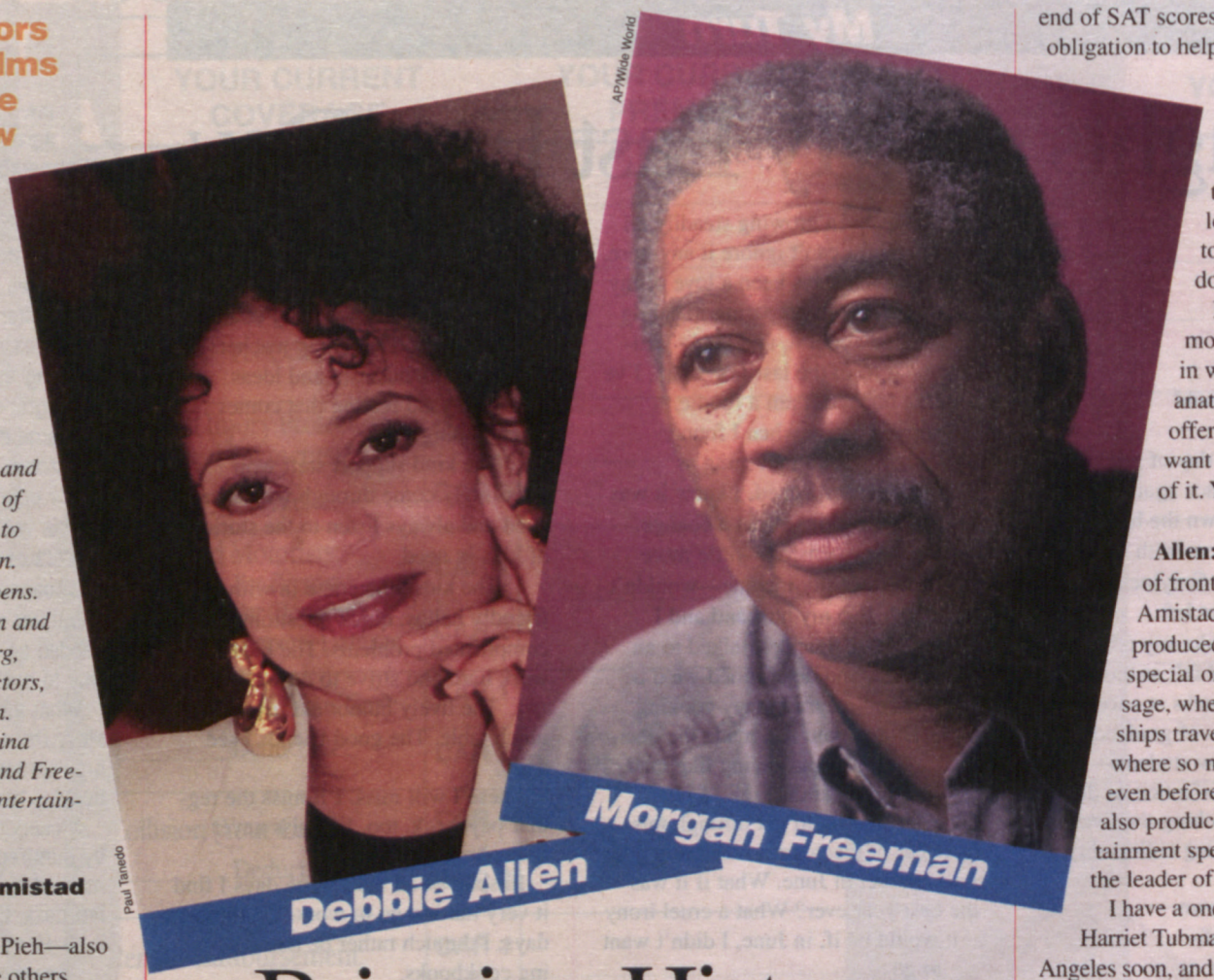
1-800-22TEACH

to order standards documents at $15 each.

National Board for Professional Teaching Standards

Meet

These two actors take pride in films that teach—like Spielberg's new movie, *Amistad*.



Bringing History To the Screen

Not many history books include the story of Amistad. But, while browsing in a bookstore 15 years ago, actor and director Debbie Allen stumbled on one.

Captivated by the true story of a slave ship revolt and a dramatic trial on the eve of the Civil War, Allen vowed to bring the story to the screen.

This season, Amistad *opens. The film, produced by Allen and directed by Steven Spielberg, stars a host of big-name actors, including Morgan Freeman.*

NEA Today*'s Anita Merina spoke recently with Allen and Freeman, both well known as entertainers—and educators.*

Why is the story of Amistad important?

Allen: The trial of Sengbe Pieh—also known as Cinque—and the others aboard *Amistad* became a rallying cry for abolitionists. The case went all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court. John Quincy Adams argued against Martin Van Buren for the Africans' freedom.

Imagine two former presidents arguing about the power of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence and how they guaranteed the rights of all free men! The issues the case raises are as profound today as they were 150 years ago.

How can *Amistad* be used in the classroom?

Allen: This film offers a great opportunity to stimulate young people's interest in history, because it's not going to be, well, like spinach—something good for you but bland. It's a dramatic, violent story.

You'll be able to explore so many arenas in history—the Constitution, slavery, the Civil War. That's why I felt scholars needed to be in line with this film. I spent a great deal of time getting experts on the Amistad story as consultants on the film. We wanted the truth in this film.

That's also why I'm co-writing the teacher's guide along with scholars. And I was able to get Walter Dean Myers to do a children's book based on the Amistad incident. I don't want this film or its story to just disappear.

Freeman: There's plenty kids can learn from *Amistad*. In my high school days, I had a history teacher and an English teacher who'd say, "Go see this movie and come back and talk about it." They'd develop a lesson plan, and we'd talk about it all week.

As an actor, it's part of my agenda to educate. I've always known that I've gotten an awful lot of historical concepts from the movies.

So when we have a really interesting historical tale to tell, then I say do it and do it accurately. Don't screw around with history—we have to be careful because we do impact young minds.

You've both played educators. What have the roles meant to you?

Freeman: I played the principal Joe Clark in *Lean on Me*. In that role and in my role as an abolitionist in *Amistad*, I learned how tough it is for someone who has the passion and presence to keep fighting to do things right.

From *Lean on Me*, I also learned how our society treats teachers. Teachers were my salvation, I'm sure. I don't think we can do much for teachers today by simply saying, "Hey, go on and fight the good fight." We can help them by paying them a salary commensurate with their contribution.

Allen: I was a teacher and eventually head of the dance department at Duke Ellington School of Performing Arts in Washington, D.C., and I still go back and teach classes there. I'm proud of my work in *Fame* because it helped launch performing arts schools around the country.

As a director, I'm also proud of *A Different World*. We changed the direction of the show and tackled real-life issues like voter apathy, date rape, and racism. As a result, we saw enrollment at Black colleges triple.

What else do you do—beyond television and film—to educate young people?

Freeman: I'm from Mississippi. I got my start there, then I went away and did my work, did what my teachers said I could do, and came back to see that Mississippi students have the low end of SAT scores. I feel I have an obligation to help change that.

So I created a foundation to help fund scholarships and provide additional funding to local school systems to do whatever needs doing.

But I don't hand out money. I don't believe in welfare—I think it's anathema. Instead, I offer a challenge: "You want it done, I'll do half of it. You raise the rest."

Allen: I'm working on lots of fronts related to the Amistad story. I recently produced a History Channel special on the Middle Passage, where transatlantic slave ships traveled to America and where so many people died even before reaching land. I've also produced an Arts & Entertainment special on Sengbe Pieh, the leader of the revolt.

I have a one-woman show about Harriet Tubman opening up in Los Angeles soon, and I plan to take that on the road. I've also rewritten the children's story, *The Twelve Princesses*, made the princesses into princes, and transformed the book into a hip-hop-tap musical called *Brothers of the Night*.

In the future, I hope to produce and direct more films. It is a very tough business, but doing *Amistad* may have opened more doors. I hope, too, that it will have opened more minds.

Resources

- You can get the *Amistad Film Study Guide*, written by Debbie Allen and Arthur Abraham, by sending a self-addressed, stamped envelope to Mike Vollman, Dreamworks SKG, 100 Universal Plaza, Building 100, Universal City, CA 91608. Limited copies available.
- *Amistad: A Long Road to Freedom* by Walter Dean Myers will be published in February by Penguin/Dutton ($5.99 paper, $16.99 hardcover, 800/253-6476).
- Amistad America, a non-profit educational organization, is building the Amistad replica as a floating museum and classroom based in New Haven, Connecticut. The project will include Amistad Online, a Web site that will include curricular materials, an open forum, and links to other Amistad sites. For more information, go to http://amistad.mysticseaport.org/welcome.html.

Debate

Are Too Many Kids Labeled Gifted?

Chris Kasson

Yes

Patti Bricker coordinates the gifted and ESL programs for the South-Western City Schools in Grove City, Ohio, and serves as president of the Gifted Coordinators of Central Ohio. A 22-year educator, Bricker's an active member of the South-Western Education Association. She can be reached at Bricke1@aol.com.

As a coordinator of services for gifted students, I spend a great deal of time meeting with parents who are upset that their child isn't labeled gifted.

I patiently explain that parents and teachers confuse well-behaved, good students with gifted ones all the time.

I tell parents that just because their daughter gets all *A*s, follows the rules, and achieves at an above-average level doesn't mean she's gifted.

I tell them that just as their son's academic weaknesses don't make him learning disabled, his strengths don't necessarily make him gifted.

Then I try to help them understand what giftedness means. I explain that a truly gifted child has the potential to demonstrate exceptional ability, ability that far exceeds what's typical for that child's age.

I explain that a truly gifted child thinks differently when it comes to problem-solving, applying knowledge to new situations, and making connections. Like a gifted athlete, a student gifted in mathematics, for example, can perform extraordinary feats when innate ability is coupled with appropriate nurturing.

I explain to parents and teachers that labeling children gifted when they're not can have serious, negative consequences.

Some kids may get stuck with a label that will set them up for failure. Once labeled, the kids who can't do the work expected of gifted students may suffer a loss of confidence that makes it harder—not easier—for them to live up to their potential.

In addition, when students with a wide range of ability levels are included in classes for gifted students, the curriculum for those classes is diluted.

The result is one-size-fits-all service, which benefits the kids in the middle the most. When that happens, the truly gifted students are not getting the education they need and deserve.

Finally, if we place kids who aren't truly gifted into the gifted program, we mislead parents and teachers about the true definition of giftedness. That leads to a continued cycle of disappointment, disillusionment, and general distrust in the school system.

So what about the kids who are gifted in nonacademic ways? Since the advent of Howard Gardner's multiple intelligences, it has become popular to assume a "strength" equals "giftedness." This seems nonproductive. We're identifying too many students because the definition is too broad.

In Ohio, we're required to identify students as "gifted" in the nonacademic areas of creativity and visual and performing arts, in addition to cognitive ability and specific academic subjects. Students identified in nonacademic areas usually receive no gifted services. What's the point?

To fix what's broken, we need to streamline our identification process so that we're getting the very top students in particular domains. We need to train teachers to recognize and nurture exceptional ability. Then we can design quality programming to meet students' individual needs.

In the final analysis, it's in everyone's best interest to be realistic about giftedness, a phenomenon that defines just 3 percent of our population.

After all, how many Michael Jordans, Pavarottis, and Einsteins do you know?

New Jersey Newsphotos

No

Roberta Kaplan Braverman teaches gifted and talented students at the Mount Laurel Hartford School for fifth and sixth graders in New Jersey. An Association activist, Braverman is vice president of the New Jersey Association for Gifted Children. She can be reached at BraveMOM@aol.com.

Too many kids are *not* labeled gifted. In fact, there are too few students identified as gifted, and those who are don't get the services they deserve.

Today's gifted students are an endangered species, hovering close to extinction because some believe equal opportunity means everyone should get exactly the same education.

I say put the pleasing—but rhetorical—notion that "all kids are gifted" aside. Not all kids can be rocket scientists. Those who can deserve an appropriately challenging education.

Gifted students, by definition, represent the top 5 to 10 percent of learners. Traditional ways to identify gifted students—through test scores, demonstrated mastery, and nominations by peers, teachers, and parents—don't go far enough.

With training, educators can—and must—find the gifted students who aren't teacher-pleasers, the kids who act out because they're bored, and the females and minorities who are often just overlooked.

Once identified, this larger group of gifted students must have access to services that help them reach their awesome potential. That's not happening today for a few key reasons:

- Heterogeneous grouping, cooperative learning, dumbed-down textbooks, padded scores on standardized tests, and standards interpreted as ends in themselves have all contributed to trap gifted students in one-size-fits-all classes.
- Teachers, overwhelmed with the span of students' abilities in very mixed classes, are teaching below the middle. Gifted students get less teacher time and attention and are often recruited to tutor less able classmates. Many are bored.
- Classroom teachers don't routinely pretest and compact the curriculum for gifted students because they haven't been required or trained to do so.

And yet research shows that gifted students often know more than 80 percent of the content to be taught in an academic year—before it starts.

- As financing public schools becomes increasingly difficult, the academically gifted are seen as the least needy group. Budget cuts almost always eliminate programs for the gifted first.

The myth prevails that these students will make it on their own. The truth: We're in danger of producing a population of underachievers, performing far below their abilities, perhaps forever turned off to education.

To educate more gifted students better, teachers need training to recognize and work with this talented population. A top staff development priority: management skills to accommodate mixed ability classes.

In addition, schools need to make pretesting, pacing plans, enriched curriculum, and flexible schedules available for gifted students.

It's not important whether students are pulled out of or supported in regular classes by specialists, labeled or not labeled gifted. It's critical that those with academic talent get an appropriate education.

Developing leaders and problem solvers to guide us through the next century should be our goal. The notion that "too many kids are labeled gifted" is stifling our students—and our future.

What's Your Opinion?

Are too many kids labeled gifted?

To vote, visit our Web site at **www.nea.org/neatoday** and see the results instantly.

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Technology

The Education Technology Promotion Guide from the Software Publishers Association offers guidelines for publicizing the success of your educational technology program. A CD-ROM includes letter and press release templates in both MAC and PC formats. To learn how your local association can obtain a copy, visit the NEA's Tech page at http://www.nea.org/cet.

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Health Resources

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Did you just reinvent the wheel? Don't fall into this trap. Read *Teaching and Change.* It's a great way to connect with classroom innovators and the action research that's happening every day in schools and classrooms nationwide. Call 800/229-4200, ext. 27 for more information.

PROFILES IN COMMUNITIES

More and more people are realizing that children are far more likely to have successful school careers when parents, schools, and communities work in partnerships. "Profiles in Communities" contains descriptions of some successful NEA parent, school, community partnerships. Please contact NEA's Center for the Revitalization of Urban Education (CRUE) for copies and information at 202/822-7155 or FAX 202/ 822-7997 or NEACRUE1@aol.com.

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Books

The Limits of School Reform

If schools can't save kids or boost student achievement, who can? Two authors, two answers.

Beyond the Classroom
Why School Reform Has Failed And What Parents Need To Do
Laurence Steinberg. Simon & Schuster, 224 pp., $12, 800/223-2336.

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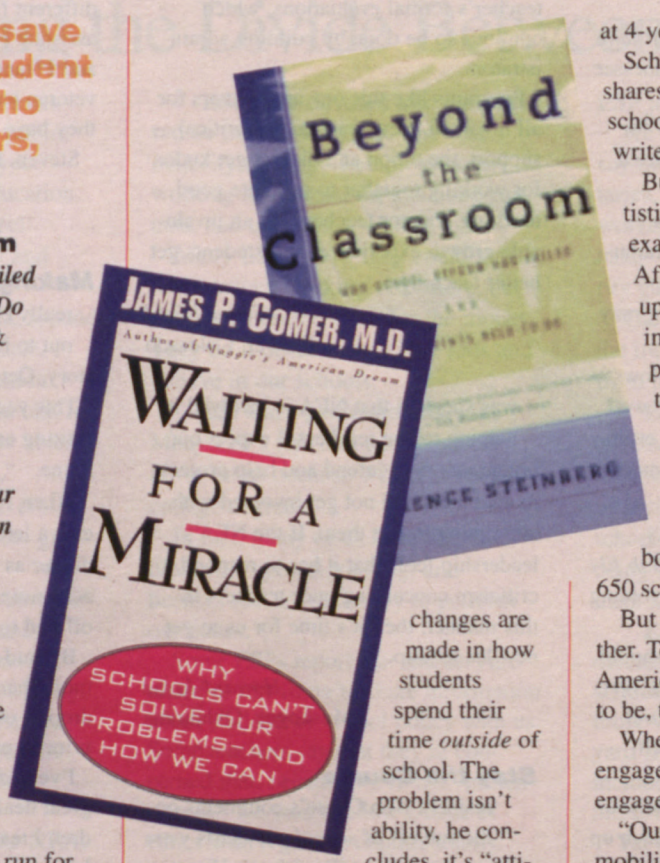
Why Schools Can't Solve Our Problems—And How We Can
James P. Comer. Dutton/Penguin, 264 pp., $24.95, 800/253-6476.


Beyond the Classroom
JAMES P. COMER, M.D.
Author of Maggie's American Dream
WAITING FOR A MIRACLE
WHY SCHOOLS CAN'T SOLVE OUR PROBLEMS—AND HOW WE CAN

"It is time we faced the music," writes Laurence Steinberg in *Beyond the Classroom*. "Fifteen years of school reform has not really accomplished anything."

Nod—or gnash—but don't run for cover. Unlike most who share the sentiment, Steinberg isn't blasting educators. His surveys of more than 20,000 high schoolers over the past 10 years point the finger elsewhere.

School reform, he argues, won't—can't—boost student achievement until changes are made in how students spend their time *outside* of school. The problem isn't ability, he concludes, it's "attitude and effort."

How to get students engaged in learning? Steinberg's 10-point plan calls for limiting after-school jobs, getting parents into schools, making transcripts matter, creating national standards, eliminating remedial education at 4-year colleges, and more.

School reformer James Comer shares Steinberg's premise: Expecting schools to solve our problems, Comer writes, "is like waiting for a miracle."

But where Steinberg turns to statistics, Comer turns to personal example. With tales from his own African-American, working class upbringing, he underlines the importance of culture, family, peers, educators, and expectations.

Comer explains how and why his model for school change—the School Development Program—has been successful in boosting student achievement in 650 schools in 28 states.

But Comer goes further—much further. To reach *all* kids, he argues, America must "become what it set out to be, the Good Society."

Where Steinberg calls for *student* engagement, Comer calls for *citizen* engagement.

"Our mission," he writes, "is to mobilize the caring majority," build coalitions, then convince policymakers to fight for the programs and funding that matter. "Schools can't solve our problems," Comer says, "but *we* can."

Just don't think that lets *you* off the hook.

—Stefanie Weiss

NEA Professional Library Top 10 Bestseller List

1 Bright Ideas: A Pocket Mentor for Beginning Teachers. Mary Clement. ($4.50) This checklist reveals the secrets of surviving the first year of teaching. (#2153-3-10-FB)

2 Pitfalls and Potholes: A Checklist for Avoiding Common Mistakes of Beginning Teachers. Barbara A. Murray and Kenneth T. Murray. ($4.50) The second title in the Checklist Series offers practical advice to new teachers. (#2151-7-10-FB)

3 Moving to the Block: Getting Ready to Teach in Extended Periods of Learning Time. Fleming, Olenn, Schoenstein, and Eineder. ($4.50) The ultimate block scheduling checklist, this compact book answers your questions on how, why, and when to consider moving from a traditional schedule to a block schedule. (#2159-2-10-FB)

4 Bullyproof: A Teacher's Guide on Teasing and Bullying for Use with Fourth and Fifth Grade Students. Nan Stein and Lisa Sjostrom. ($15.95) "Bullyproof" your classroom with these teacher-tested lessons. (#1873-7-10-FB)

5 Inspiring Quality in Your School. Robert A. Sullo. ($14.95) This book shows why *you* are the most important person to inspire quality in your school. (#2951-8-10-FB)

6 The First Year Teacher: Teaching with Confidence (K-8). Bosch & Kersey. ($14.95) The ultimate first-year teacher's handbook. (#1862-1-10-FB)

7 Plants, Animals, and Humid Beans. ($6.95) A new book filled with fun tales from the classroom. Based on *NEA Today*'s humor page, "In the Light Lane," this book will bring a smile to any educator's face. Great for holiday gifts. (#1880-X-10-FB)

8 Inspiring Discipline: A Practical Guide for Today's Classrooms. Merrill Harmin. ($10.95) Teachers and other educators say, "We want how-to materials on discipline." This book delivers with strategies you can put to use immediately in your classroom. (#2950-X-10-FB)

9 Multiple Intelligences. NEA Teacher-to-Teacher Books. ($9.95) Find out how your colleagues are adapting their teaching strategies to take advantage of the seven intelligences. (#2910-0-10-FB)

10 Technology for Diverse Learners. NEA Teacher-to-Teacher Books. ($9.95) When it comes to ESL and at-risk students, these teachers discovered that computers and video technology succeed where other strategies may fall short. (#2908-9-10-FB)

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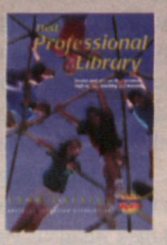

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Books by NEA Members

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Richard L. McElroy. *Stark County Historical Society, 208 pp., $19.95 plus tax, $6 s&h, 330/455-7043.* Elected as the 25th President in 1896, McKinley is remembered in this pictorial history as "a gentle but strong force for the ideals of freedom and peace."

Make Someone Smile . . . And 40 More Ways to Be a Peaceful Person.
Judy Lalli. *Free Spirit Publishing, 74 pp., $8.95 plus $3.25 s&h, 800/735-7323.* This small collection of lovely black and white photographs (by Douglas Mason-Fry) shows children modeling peacemaking and conflict resolution skills.

Americans of Character Teacher's Edition.
Elizabeth Kay. *Young People's Press, 72 pp., $28.50 plus 8 percent s&h, 800/231-9774.* This series of five biographies—of Chief Joseph, Abraham Lincoln, Harriet Tubman, Roberto Clemente, and Maya Lin ($7.95 plus 8 percent s&h for each title)—teaches children in the upper elementary grades character, plus history, social studies, and reading.

A Distant Enemy
Deb Vanasse. *Lodestar/Penguin Books, 180 pp., $16.99 plus $2 s&h, 800/253-6476.* A coming-of-age novel set in the Alaskan tundra, this book tells the story of Joseph, a Yup'ik Eskimo.

Life in the South During the Civil War
James P. Reger. *Lucent Books, 111 pp., $17.96 plus 7 percent s&h ($2.50 minimum), 800/231-5163.* Part of a series called *The Way People Live*, this text uses primary sources to show how people, both slave and free, lived in the South during the Civil War years.

Letters

Peer review is a topic that's obviously ripe for discussion. We've received hundreds of letters responding to the coverage in the November issue of* NEA Today, *most critical. Many other members continue to discuss the topic online. You can join them at www.nea.org/neatoday.

Peer Review

I'm appalled to see such a glorification of an administration hatchet-person on your cover (Cover story, November).

I have no problem with peers helping a colleague deal with his problems as perceived by administrators. And I have no problem with teachers with difficulties taking courses on classroom management.

But I do have a problem with colleagues who are seriously judgmental or who act as tools of administrators whose job it is and was to evaluate and aid teachers whose work was not up to snuff.

Joanne Huybensz
Plainview, New York

Many of us are somewhat hesitant about peer review. But it remains true that if we don't monitor ourselves, we will be monitored by those who know less about our profession than we do.

We must make sure that we're holding ourselves to the highest professional standards, not only in our teaching technique, but also in our command of our subject matter.

A.C. Smith
Ann Arbor, Michigan

Your November issue was enough to convince me to oppose peer review. I saw glowing praise of peer review from people who are peer reviewers. Where are the accolades from those teachers who have been helped?

In the Columbus model as presented, I see a system that makes one teacher subject to the personal preferences of another and stifles innovation.

Peer assistance should be an important function of NEA. Peer evaluation is a mistake.

David Williams
Oak Ridge, Tennessee

We've been using peer review for four years in my school district, and I find it extremely beneficial.

Our program doesn't pit teachers against each other. It promotes communication among teachers so they can help each other with problems they may have in the classroom.

Our peer review program also allows teachers to receive praise for a job well done. We have an "administrative evaluation" every three years, and this meets the state requirement.

If you ask me, peer review works.

Bob Ely
Laramie, Wyoming

Poor Dennis Grossman! Why should a creative teacher who "scores very high on the kid meter" be pushed out of his profession by a couple of self-righteous anal-retentives?

Here's my advice, Dennis. Allow your students time and teach them to clean up after themselves, hire some older kids to help you clean up after school, and use your time to do the beloved paperwork.

Then go home and enjoy your family. You shouldn't have to live in the school to get the job done.

Dorothy Wilson
North East, Maryland

Your readers should know that there are many different kinds of peer assistance programs, and most of them don't put teachers in a position of deciding the fate of their colleagues.

As part of a collaborative union/district project called STAR—Staff Training, Assistance, and Review, I and five other veterans are released from teaching for 2-3 years to work with new teachers or struggling teachers who need help.

We offer support, advice, resources, and coaching. We play no part in the teacher's formal evaluations, which continue to be done by building administrators.

Programs like this one are winners for all involved. New teachers get critical support, the union and district get kudos for working together to promote good teaching, mentor teachers get an invaluable growth experience, and students get better teaching.

Samuel Feld
Denver, Colorado

I was shocked that NEA is involved in helping to fire teachers. I expect our organization to defend and help protect its members and not get involved with attempting to fire them. If the NEA's leadership feels that it has to respond to criticism concerning poor teachers in this manner, then it's time for us to get new leadership.

Howard Jayne
Muskogee, Oklahoma

Stay the Course

President Bob Chase's comments on the subject of school standards were right on the money (President's Viewpoint, October). I'm sure he's getting considerable flak from the old line unionists, but I urge him to stay the course.

The new generation of teachers—our district has hired several hundred in the past four years—aren't happy with old-style unionism, and we must work with them to shape NEA for the future.

Jim Williams
New Britain, Pennsylvania

Alterations

I commend Steven Bollar on his honesty and his ability to keep the children uppermost in his mind ("What Does an Elementary School Teacher Look Like?" Letters, November). He provides kids with things that all too often get lost—humor and self-value.

I, too, understand how it feels to be different from the status quo. I'm an assistant principal, I've just turned 30, and I stand a whopping 5' tall. I have veteran teachers who remind me that they have shoes older than I am!

Steven, keep up the good work.

P. Bullock
Tarboro, North Carolina

Making It Happen

I really enjoyed your article on reaching out to hard-to-reach parents (Cover story, October).

This year, I decided to set a goal of visiting each of my 21 second graders at home.

When I got my class list, I sent all parents a letter asking them to invite me to dinner as a way to meet them and get acquainted with their family. I even offered to bring the main course.

By mid-October, I'd been invited by more than half my students. I plan to drop in on those who haven't invited me prior to parent-teacher conferences.

I've had a great time while learning a great deal about the families of the children I teach. And the parents have learned a lot about me.

This project has greatly improved the quality and quantity of parent contact and involvement in my classroom. Will I do it next year? You bet!

Bob Carroll
Evanston, Illinois

Oh-la-la!

In an article about bridging the gap between schools and parents (Cover story, October), it would have been nice if your illustrator had bridged the research gap.

His illustration, where "ola!" was erroneously used instead of "hola!" is at best poor journalism and, at worst, an ironic commentary on how little we know or care about other cultures.

This kind of glaring error is disappointing in a magazine for teaching professionals.

Kristie Cunningham
Annandale, Minnesota

Portfolio Possibilities

Peter Berger makes a strong case against the use of portfolios for the purpose of assessment (My Turn, October). But portfolios can be effectively used for other ends.

At my middle school, portfolios are one component of a comprehensive guidance program. Our goal is not evaluation or assessment. Instead, we use portfolios to help students develop career skills. It works well for us.

Gary Anderson
Fillmore, Utah

Wonder How Dennis Grossman's Doing?

My appearance in the November *NEA Today* cover story on peer assistance and review has prompted a number of people to ask me how I'm doing this school year.

I'm happy to report that this has been a successful year for me. The counseling and assistance I received from my peer reviewer helped me improve my organizational skills in the classroom.

I'm thankful I'm still able to do what I love—teach children. I owe this in large part to my union, the Columbus Education Association, and the Columbus Peer Assistance and Review Program.

Before I entered the program, I felt very threatened. I have no doubt that my principal was ready to fire me. By joining the program, I transfered the fate of my job from an administrator to a caring and supportive colleague.

I've known teachers with nearly 30 years of experience who've chosen to retire after run-ins with administrators, rather than seek help from the peer review program. They were afraid.

For me, peer review was a positive experience. My peer reviewer, Pat Stedman, reaffirmed for me that I am, in fact, a good teacher.

Dennis Grossman
Columbus, Ohio

A Letter from: Kenai Peninsula, Alaska

Conquering the Divide Between Teachers and ESPs

As we talk about the inclusion of students in public education, I think you should know that many education support personnel (ESP) feel excluded from their school and NEA families.

As I travel around Alaska, around the country, and in cyberspace, I often hear comments like these:

- "I wish teachers would talk to me. Even 'good evening' or 'thank you' would be appreciated."
- "I feel angry about the closed body language many teachers give me."
- "I wish we had better communication between teachers and ESP—even if that means having teachers put all requests in writing."
- "I feel left out when I'm eating lunch in the staff lounge, and the conversation only refers to teachers."
- "I love being part of the NEA, but I frequently feel that teachers don't want us."
- "I love my job and wouldn't want to be doing anything else."

Put these comments together, and I come out with a few thoughts I'd like you to consider:

- **ESPs are devoted and committed to the work we do.** The vast majority of support employees love working at schools, for students, parents, and teachers.

Many ESPs know they could make more money working elsewhere, but they don't do the work for the money. They do it because they love kids and believe in our schools.

- **ESPs are professionals, too.** Many ESPs feel that teachers look down on us because we don't have college degrees.

In fact, many of us have degrees, diplomas, special training, and licenses that are necessary to perform our duties.

Some ESPs report that teachers are afraid or unwilling to share information about students or school policy with us. Some teachers say that they're concerned that, because we're not "professionals," we won't follow a code of ethics with regard to confidentiality.

But informed and involved team members make the entire team work better. Teachers shouldn't be afraid to talk openly and honestly with all staff.

- **ESPs feel the work they do is often unappreciated.** That's clearest at budget time. When dollars are tight, ESP jobs are the first to go.

We need teachers to speak up and say how much our schools need secretaries, custodians, nurses, food service workers, instructional aides, maintenance workers, bus drivers, and security guards.

The community needs to hear about the importance of the work we do—from more than just us.

- **ESPs often feel taken advantage of.** One good example: Custodians and food service personnel are proud of what they contribute to the life of a school. They don't appreciate students being sent to work with them as punishment for inappropriate behavior.
- **ESPs want to be included in discussions about changes at their schools.** Many ESPs—particularly those who work on swing or graveyard shifts—feel that they're not included in or consulted about school improvement.

Yet we have important perspectives and areas of expertise that we can bring to the table. The vast majority of ESP members live in the communities where they work—that can be an invaluable resource and reality check for teachers.

Plus, we know how a change in hours might affect bus routes, or how inclusion might affect our most disabled students. We know the ramifications of keeping the school building open evenings or weekends.

- **ESPs know that it takes all of us to make a school function.** When schools run smoothly, quality learning is the "happening thing," and the learning environment is a happy, clean, and positive one.

So, teachers, please take just a minute to tell the ESPs in your building that they are valued, and that you appreciate them.

We know we are there to provide support for the very important job you have—educating our children. But we, in turn, need to have your support of the very important work that we do.

Everyone is in awe of the lion tamer in a cage with a half dozen lions. Everyone, that is, but the school bus driver!

Karen Mahurin, NEA's 1997 Education Support Person of the Year, is vice president of the National Council for Educational Support Personnel. She can be reached at kmahurin@kpbsd.k12.ak.us.

The Gift of Goosebumps

Should kids read *Goosebumps* (Debate, October)? That's a real non-debate in our house. My son began reading *Goosebumps* books in second grade. At the time, he could read but didn't like to read for recreation.

Sixty *Goosebumps* books later, our son is in fifth grade and reads all sorts of material just for the fun of it—the newspaper, *National Geographic*, and more.

He'll outgrow *Goosebumps*, but he'll never outgrow his love of reading for pleasure and knowledge.

Wendy Hill
Sunriver, Oregon

Gay Rights

Your article about the gay student who sued his school district and won was very important (Rights Watch, October). I'm proud that the NEA stands up for the protection from discrimination and abuse for all students and employees in our nation's schools.

Edward Stepanian
Rancho Cucamonga, California

I applaud the court's decision in the case of the gay student who was harassed. I'd open the legal umbrella to cover all students who are tormented at school. Aggressive and cruel bullying of any student shouldn't be tolerated in any school for any reason.

Sue Spalding
Freeport, Maine

While I think it's imperative that no student be harassed or abused, I don't understand why NEA is conducting awareness workshops on issues of concern to gay and lesbian employees.

Do NEA members want to be associated with a union that supports and even promotes sexual perversion? I know that I certainly do not.

Kathy Cardwell-Coffey
Lenoir City, Tennessee

Linda Schminda

You gave Linda Evangelista a "zero" for saying, "It was God who made me so beautiful. If I weren't, then I'd be a teacher" (Heroes & Zeroes, October).

After 28 years in the classroom, I say, "It was God who made me so intelligent. If I weren't, then I'd be a supermodel!"

Dian Bowyer
Marina del Ray, California

Keyboarding for Beginners

I want to offer another suggestion to the reader who asked for help in teaching keyboarding to elementary students (Bits & Bytes, October).

I suggest that educators learn and teach the "Dvorak" keyboard layout—it's better than the traditional "Querty" layout. For details, go to www.dvorakint.org or call Keytime, Inc. in Seattle (206/522-8973) to ask for a catalog.

Steven Wrightson
Easton, Maryland

Reiner's Homework

It's great that Rob Reiner is putting movie making aside to rally support for children from birth to age three (Meet, October). But if Reiner had done his homework, he would have found out that Missouri has had such a program since 1985. The program, Parents as Teachers, has been copied in 47 states.

Katie Newport
Springfield, Missouri

Welcome Aboard

Your story on mentoring new teachers really delighted us (Cover story, September). Last year for the first time, our Association established a committee for non-tenured teachers. The committee intends to hold information and discussion meetings for new teachers and create a local support network for them.

The response has been overwhelmingly positive—from new and experienced teachers alike. Like NEA, we're committed to helping new teachers succeed.

Carol Beyer, Jenny Pearson, Carl Brenneman, Carrie Thiel, Cindy Jones
Kalispell, Montana

Let's Talk

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